

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE IN COLONIAL  
NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA: THE HISTORY OF  
AKWANGA DIVISION, 1911-1960.**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the product of my research and has been written by me. It has not been presented for higher degree in any other University. All quotations have been acknowledged and distinguished by footnotes and quotation marks.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is concerned with the social and economic history of the communities of the Akwanga division of Plateau province in central Nigeria from the beginning of formal British administration in 1911 to the end of colonial rule in 1960. The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first looks at the early history of the peoples of Akwanga with emphasis on their political, religious and economic organisation. It also discusses the effect of the nineteenth-century Sokoto jihad on settlement patterns in the region. Chapter 2 deals with resistance to the colonial conquest, which lasted up to 1925. Chapter 3 discusses the development of the indirect rule system and native administration, focusing on the creation of chiefs, divisional boundaries and the native administrative policies pursued by successive Governors of Nigeria. Chapter 4 looks at taxation and cash crop production and their impact on the peoples of Akwanga. Chapter 5 examines the use of local labour for building the infrastructure of colonial rule and for tin mining, which dominated the economy of Plateau province. Chapter 6 discusses the religious encounter between Islam, Christianity and indigenous belief and how these two world religions shaped the political identity of the people of the region. Chapter 7 focuses on the demise of indirect rule and the emergence party politics in Akwanga with emphasis on minority politics and the role of the educated groups in the politics and process of decolonisation.



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ADO - Assistant District Officer

AG – Action Group

AR – Annual Report

ARK – Arewa House, Kaduna

BPU - Berom Progressive Union

BNL – British Newspaper Library, Colindale, London

CMS – Church Missionary Society

DO - District Officer

IJHS - The International Journal of Historical Studies

JAH – Journal of African History

JAS – Journal of African Society

JHSN – Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria

JMA – Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa

MBPP – Middle Belt People’s Party

MHA – Member of the House of Assembly

MZL – Middle Zone League

NA – Native Authority

NAK – National Archive Kaduna

NCA – Northern Christian Association

NCNC – National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons

NEPA – Northern Elements Progressive Association

NEPU – Northern Elements Progressive Union

NNM – Northern Nigeria Mission

NNML - Northern Non-Muslim League

NPC – Northern People’s Congress

PRO – Public Record Office (The National Archives), Kew

RHO – Rhodes House Library, Oxford

SIM - Sudan Interior Mission

SUM – Sudan United Mission

RNC - The Royal Niger Company

UMBC – United Middle Belt Congress

## GLOSSARY

Word	Language	Description
Abibli	Eggon	Spirits
Ada Ubin	”	Father of the land
Alawayo	Hausa	White clothes
Aljanu	”	Jinn
Alkali	”	Judge
Alwala	”	Ablution
Andakpo	Eggon	Elder
Ari	Eggon	Chief
Arne	Hausa	Pagan
Baku	Rindre	Spirit of ancestors
Bazara	Hausa	Hot Season
Bori	”	Cult of Possession
Bri	Mada	Spirits.
Burukutu	Hausa	Local Beer
Chun	Mada	Chief
Cinci	”	Clans
Daji	Hausa	Forest Woodland
Dawa	”	Guinea Corn
Dogarai	”	Body Guards
Doki	”	Horse
Ekú	Eggon	Buffalo Horn
Fodiye	Fulani	The Learned

Habe	”	Non-Fulani
Gandu	”	Tributes
Glu-kyu	Mada	Funeral dance
Gwado	Hausa	Blankets
Hakimi	Hausa	District Head
Haraji	”	Tax
Igu	Eggon	Lineage Group
Iskoki	Hausa	Bad Spirits
Jama’a	”	Gathering
Jangali	”	Cattle Tax
Kofa	”	Door
Lunku	Mada	Elders
Ma’aji	Hausa	Treasurer
Madan Dutse	”	Hill Mada
Malam	”	Teacher
Masun Sarauta	”	Ruling Class
Njwi	Mada	Masquerade.
Nonon Giwa	Hausa	Elephant Breast
Rinji	”	Plantations
Sarki	”	King
Talakawa	”	Commoners
Tsafi	”	Ritual
Tsere	”	Bow
Waziri	”	Vizier
Yari	”	Prison



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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the economic and social history of the peoples of Akwanga division of Plateau Province in central Nigeria during the period of colonial rule. Before the advent of British rule in central Nigeria, the communities that would later become Akwanga had no descriptive name for the region. Akwanga was first created in 1911, when Mr Campbell Irons was appointed as the first Resident. In 1930, following the reorganisation of the Northern Provinces, the name of the division was changed from Akwanga to Southern division. The thesis aims to re-incorporate into history the neglected communities of Akwanga and contribute to the debate on the notion of states and “pagan” tribes in the West African savannah. Until recently, the study of the so-called “pagan” societies was largely the domain of anthropologists, while “states” became the preoccupation of historians. This thesis attempts to break that barrier and to demonstrate that people living on the periphery of state systems have a history. It will be argued that the peoples of Akwanga region created their own history by resisting their powerful centralised neighbours and the British colonial state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The main focus of the thesis is the social and economic changes that occurred in Akwanga during the colonial period, particularly taxation and cash crop production, mining and labour migration. Although colonial rule in Akwanga was brief, it profoundly and irreversibly transformed the region. One important aspect of that

transformation was the re-organisation of labour and production. The establishment of British rule drew the peoples of Akwanga into a cash economy, involving taxation and labour migration. Another aspect was rapid population growth as a result of the progress in medical science, which reduced the death rate and increased life expectancy. This was in addition to the influx of immigrants into the region who took advantage of British law and order to trade or seek employment at the commercial and administrative centre of the division. Other changes were demonstrated in the transformation of the nature of religious belief. Christian and Muslim missionaries also took advantage of the peace and order and pushed further into hitherto inaccessible areas, gaining far more ground than had been the case in the nineteenth century. However, it should be noted that colonial change was contradictory and subtle; new did not simply replace old, but blended with it and the peoples of Akwanga adapted and reshaped these changes to meet their needs.

In the nineteenth century, what would become the so-called Middle-Belt of central Nigeria was a vast region largely outside the control of the Sokoto Caliphate, comprising small chieftaincies and communities in varying stages of political development. Although most communities in the region can be described as “stateless,” there were also a number of states that were under some form of control from the emirates of Bauchi and Zaria. Buchanan and Pugh have described central Nigeria as situated in the Middle-Belt zone, which represents a transition zone between the forest to the south and the savannah to the north with a form of transitional woodland vegetation.<sup>1</sup> It covers an area of approximately 342,390 square kilometres or 37 per cent of the total land area of Nigeria and it is bordered to the east and west by Cameroon and Benin

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<sup>1</sup> K.M. Buchanan and J.C. Pugh, *Land and People in Nigeria* (London, 1962), p.35.

respectively.<sup>2</sup> British colonial administration in central Nigeria began in 1900, when Frederick Lugard declared northern Nigeria as part of the British Empire. The communities that inhabited what would become Akwanga division were administered initially under Nasarawa province but were later transferred to Plateau province after its creation in 1926. Nasarawa province was at first called Lower Benue province, but following the formal submission of the emir of Nasarawa to the British early in 1902, the headquarters of the province was moved from Akwanaja to Nasarawa town and the name of the province was subsequently changed to Nasarawa.<sup>3</sup> The headquarters of the province was further moved to Keffi in late 1902 and following the discovery of tin at Jama'a in 1912, the headquarters of the province was moved there.<sup>4</sup> With the reorganisation of the Northern provinces in 1926, Plateau province was created out of Bauchi, Muri and Nasarawa provinces and it became the smallest province in northern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

The peoples of Akwanga included indigenous groups such as Mada, Eggon, Rindre and Kantana, as well as settler groups like Hausawa, Igbo and Yoruba. Akwanga covers an area of 1290 square miles and lies to the southwest of the escarpment of the Jos Plateau.<sup>6</sup> Population records are non-existent before the advent of British rule, but people of the area numbered 43,380 by 1914 and 75,224 by 1928.<sup>7</sup> Before the advent of British rule, there was no collective name for the peoples that lived in the area, but were each known by their different settlements.

<sup>2</sup> P.D. Dawan, "Aspects of the Geography of Central Nigeria Area," in A.A. Idrees and Y.A. Ochefu (eds), *Studies in the History of Central Nigeria Area* (Lagos, 2002), pp.3-4.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Sciortino, *Notes on Nasarawa Province* (London, 1920), p.19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

<sup>5</sup> C.G. Ames, *Gazetteer of Plateau Province* (Jos, 1934), p.8.

<sup>6</sup> National Archive Kaduna, Secretary Northern Provinces [hereafter NAK SNP] 17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division, by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.

The history of central Nigeria has been neglected by scholars compared to the Hausa states to the north of it. Historical scholarship on northern Nigeria is dominated by the history of Hausa people at the expense of the numerous small-scale communities of central Nigeria, which were often treated as reservoirs for slaves and providers of tribute to the Hausa-Fulani state-builders. One of the obvious difficulties in studying the communities in central Nigeria is that the societies were decentralised. Information that exists about the peoples in the region is limited and mostly written during the colonial period. Therefore, the general understanding about the local people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is mostly based on the views held either by the Hausa-Fulani or the British colonial administration. The consequence of such a view is that the groups in the area are treated as static and having virtually been unchanged from the jihadic period to the “ethnographic present” of the mid-twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Thus, looking at this research from the perspective of African historiography, it will not only cover the vacuum that existed but will also contribute to the general historiography of central Nigeria. Although the study focuses on Akwanga, it has wider implications for the Nigerian Middle-Belt as a whole and for small-scale “stateless” societies in the West African savannah generally.

### **CENTRAL NIGERIA AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF AKWANGA**

Central Nigeria is one of Africa’s most ethnographically complex areas – a region with a diverse array of distinct and competing identities. Despite the differences that exist amongst the communities in the region, in the seventeenth century, they

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<sup>8</sup> B. Sharpe, “Ethnography and a Regional System: Mental Maps and the Myth of States and Tribes in North-Central Nigeria,” *Critique of Anthropology*, 6 (1986), p.35.

created a distinct identity for themselves known as “Kwararafa”. Colonial writers sometimes took such claims out of context. For example, based on oral information collected in the 1930s, Mr. Hunter Shaw, the District Officer of Akwanga, wrote that the Eggon and Rindre people were at one time part of the Kwararafa kingdom.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, most of the colonial records on the traditions of the communities in central Nigeria claim that at one time they all lived together in “Kwararafa.” The concept of a common home should not be taken literally. Rather, it is a symbolic expression of a culture, which to a large extent they share.

Richard Shain has analysed the emergence of the Kwararafa state through the prism of Apa identity.<sup>10</sup> He argues that the Apa identity first emerged in the sixteenth century and at its inception, it linked together the peoples producing and trading salt in Nigeria’s Benue river valley. Those peoples later formed a state, Kwararafa, which became a major Sudanic power in the seventeenth century. Shain maintained that Kwararafa was highly decentralised, culturally diverse and was never physically contiguous. Politically, it embodied what Appadurai referred to as “sovereignty without territoriality.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Shain argues that Kwararafa was an archipelago state and region composed of economic, religious and political nuclei along the river valley of central Nigeria and that it lacked both identifiable boundaries and a spatial focal point.<sup>12</sup> The crux of his argument is that the Apa identity was the product of an enduring alliance of three groups: the many different local salt producers; the Jukun rain makers and

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<sup>9</sup> NAK Jos, Provincial Headquarter (hereafter Jos Prof) 488, Volume II: The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of Intelligence Report on, 1935.

<sup>10</sup> R.M. Shain, “The Salt that Binds: The Historical Geography of a Central Nigerian Regional Identity,” in A.M. Howard and R.M. Shain (eds), *The Spatial Factor in African History: The Relationship of the Social, Material, and Perceptual* (Boston, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> A. Appadurai, “Sovereignty Without Territoriality: Notes for a Post-national Geography,” in P. Yaeger (ed), *The Geography of Identity* (Michigan, 1996), p.40.

<sup>12</sup> Shain, “Salt that Binds,” p.248.

Hausa-speaking Abakwariga salt merchants. These groups were bound together by a common interest in manufacturing and distributing salt. The formation of this salt complex resulted in an "increased density of the interconnectedness of group to place and place to other places."<sup>13</sup> Out of this "increased density of interconnectedness" grew first the Apa regional identity and then Kwararafa state. In other words, a regional pattern of production held the Apa identity together and laid the foundation for the Kwararafa state. He further argues that in the second half of the twentieth century, a revitalised Apa identity constituted one of the principal historical and ideological foundations of Nigeria's Middle-Belt sub-region.

For the most part, despite their central position, the people of the region have been represented as politically and economically peripheral: marginal, when viewed from the northern state centres, or as part of a hinterland, when seen from the coast. Central Nigeria was considered by the Hausa as *Kasashen Bauchi* (Bauchi countries) as most communities in the area were mistakenly considered to be part of the Bauchi emirate.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the British take-over of the Jos tin mines was based on a treaty between the Royal Niger Company (RNC) and the emir of Bauchi in 1888, signed under the erroneous assumption that the area was part of Bauchi.<sup>15</sup> According to Barrie Sharpe, historical accounts of central Nigeria presuppose that the nineteenth century was marked by a "widespread movement to incorporate previously isolated 'tribal' societies into the slaving economies of the jihadic 'state.'"<sup>16</sup> The history of the region until recently was largely ignored by historians who were more concerned with the diplomatic, political

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<sup>13</sup> J.N. Entikín, *The Betweenness of Place* (Baltimore, 1991), p.129.

<sup>14</sup> A. Mahdi, *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Zaria, 1978), especially chapter 2.

<sup>15</sup> NAK SNP 9/488/1923: Royalties on Mineral, Correspondence Relating to 1888-1905.

<sup>16</sup> Sharpe, "Ethnography and a Regional System," p.35.



and economic history of “Hausaland.” The “pagan” societies, as already mentioned, became the focal point of research by anthropologists. The colonial government encouraged research by anthropologist and used it as the basis for the application of the native administration system in the region. Therefore, anthropology became an academic discipline that developed with British colonial expansion. Anthropology was a colonial science dedicated to the study of the non-Western peoples and the anthropologists focused on small communities over a limited period and dealt with the people “as residents of a ‘timeless present’ abstracted from history.”<sup>17</sup> According to Kuklick, anthropology was a brainchild of colonialism, which constructed a distinct identity that depended on its relationship with imperialism.<sup>18</sup> It encouraged the study of the language and culture of the peoples being administered, which were subsequently embodied into administrative strategy.

Anthropologists of the colonial period colluded with colonial officials by justifying their research as attempts to provide an ethnographic record of people without history.<sup>19</sup> The assertion that African societies were profoundly conservative was “by no means always intended as an indictment of African backwardness or reluctance to modernise.”<sup>20</sup> British colonial administration employed “Government Anthropologists” who were dispatched to study central Nigerian communities. One of the leading anthropologists of the colonial period was Charles Meek (District Officer and Census Commissioner for Nigeria), who after the 1921 census was commissioned to write an

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<sup>17</sup> B. Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: The Development of African Society Since 1800* (London, 1998), p.5.

<sup>18</sup> H. Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945* (Cambridge, 1991), p.62.

<sup>19</sup> J. Goody, *The Expansive Moment: Anthropology in Britain and Africa, 1918-1970* (Cambridge, 1995), p.57.

<sup>20</sup> T. Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p.247.

ethnographic account of the peoples of the Northern Provinces.<sup>21</sup> Meek's publication was originally intended to be a census report for the Northern Provinces, which included a considerable amount of ethnography. This was followed in 1931 by his works on the "tribal" peoples of northern Nigeria and the study of the Nupe people.<sup>22</sup> The former was essentially a survey of more than fifty non-Muslim groups with the aim of providing a "practical assistance" for the colonial government for effective administration of the "pagan" societies.<sup>23</sup> Although Meek based his studies of some of the groups in the monographs from reports given to him by the colonial administration, it nevertheless became the first anthropological work that covers a wide area of the "pagan" peoples of northern Nigeria.

Colonial administrators and anthropologists were more concerned with larger groups like the Tiv, Nupe, Idoma and Jukun, with the result that smaller groups like those of Akwanga have been neglected. For example, in 1933, Captain Roy Abraham, the Anthropological Officer of northern Nigeria carried out an extensive study of the Tiv people and their language, which resulted in the publication of several monographs.<sup>24</sup> In 1942, S.F. Nadel a professionally trained Anthropologist, published his classic monograph on the Nupe kingdom, which was followed by his study of Nupe religion in 1954.<sup>25</sup> Unlike earlier ethnographer-officials, Nadel's aim was not directly to provide information on the peoples of central Nigeria which could be useful to the colonial administration. In his introductory remarks on the history of the Nupe people, however,

<sup>21</sup> C.K. Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria* (London, 1925), 2 volumes.

<sup>22</sup> C.K. Meek, *Tribal Studies in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1931); idem, *A Sudanese Kingdom: An Ethnographical Study of the Jukun-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria* (London, 1931).

<sup>23</sup> Meek, *Tribes of Nigeria*, p.v.

<sup>24</sup> R.C. Abraham, *The Tiv People* (Lagos, 1933); idem, *The Grammar of Tiv* (Kaduna, 1933); idem, *The Principles of Tiv* (London, 1940); idem, *A Dictionary of Tiv Language* (London, 1940).

<sup>25</sup> S.F. Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria* (London, 1942); idem, *Nupe Religion: Traditional Beliefs and the influence of Islam in a West African Chiefdom* (New York, 1954).

Nadel wrote: "it has been said that modern anthropology is destined to be of great assistance to colonial governments in providing the knowledge of the social structure of native groups upon which a sound and harmonious Native Administration as envisaged in Indirect Rule, should be built."<sup>26</sup>

In 1945, the International African Institute began to engage in the preparation and publication of an ethnographic survey of Africa with grants made available by the British Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. The aim of the survey, according to Daryll Forde, general editor of the series, was "to present a concise, critical and accurate account of our present knowledge of the tribal groupings."<sup>27</sup> The grants made available by the institute increased anthropological research into the peoples of central Nigeria. Anthropologists that benefited from the grants and carried out fieldwork in central Nigeria included Paul and Laura Bohanan (on the Tiv); Robert Armstrong (Igala and Idoma); Paula Brown (Igbira) and Daryll Forde (Nupe).<sup>28</sup> Although an attempt was made to study the peoples of Plateau region by Harold Gunn, he concentrated on the Berom, Jarawa, Pyem and Ganawuri of the Jos Plateau at the expense of the peoples of Akwanga.<sup>29</sup>

Post-colonial anthropological and historical research in central Nigeria has continued to marginalise the peoples of Akwanga. However, Idrees and Ochefu edited a recent book on the communities in central Nigeria which includes a chapter by John Nengel on the colonial conquest of the polities of the Jos Plateau including the Eggon

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<sup>26</sup> Nadel, *Black Byzantium*, p.vi.

<sup>27</sup> See Daryll Forde's foreword to H.D. Gunn, *Peoples of the Plateau Area of Northern Nigeria* (London, 1953).

<sup>28</sup> Paul and Laura Bohanan, *Tiv of Central Nigeria* (London, 1953); D. Forde (ed), *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence: Nupe, Igbira, Igala and Idoma* (London, 1955).

<sup>29</sup> Gunn, *Peoples of the Plateau Area*.

and Mada people.<sup>30</sup> He relied on an unpublished paper by Kasimu Kigbu to analyse the resistance of the peoples of Akwanga to the British penetration into the region.

In the economic studies of the peoples of Plateau, the groups in Akwanga have also been neglected. For example, Bill Freund in his study on the tin mines in Plateau province only referred to the communities in Akwanga in passing although the people of the area were part of the province and were engaged in tin mining. He focussed specifically on the Berom of Jos at the expense of the minority mining communities of the province.<sup>31</sup> Despite this short-coming, Freund's treatment of the problem of food supply to the mines does touch on the changing economy of the peoples of Akwanga, although he approached the issue in terms of administrative efforts at control from Jos, the provincial headquarters.

The nature of relationship between the "pagan" societies of the Kauru and Pengana hills in the Plateau highlands and the Hausa-Fulani state builders is analysed by John Nengel.<sup>32</sup> The study examines the relations within and between these polities and between them and the Islamic states which emerged in their neighbourhood in the nineteenth century. It considers both patterns of peaceful coexistence and military confrontations between the Hausa-Fulani state builders and their "pagan" neighbours. The nature of the relationship that existed between the people of Pengana and Kauru and their powerful neighbours negates the fact that "stateless" societies in the West African savannah were passive victims of predatory action by their powerful neighbours. Until recently, the formation and development of militarised states like the Sokoto Caliphate

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<sup>30</sup> Idrees and Ochefu (eds), *History of Central Nigeria*, pp.279-303.

<sup>31</sup> B. Freund, *Capital and Labour in Nigerian Tin Mines* (New Jersey, 1981), pp.156-170.

<sup>32</sup> J.G. Nengel, *Precolonial African Intergroup Relations in the Kauru and Pengana Polities of Central Nigerian Highlands 1800-1900* (Paris, 1998).

and its emirates was associated with the transfer of population from the decentralised societies of central Nigeria through slave raids. The decentralised communities were presented as helpless victims of the slave raids from the emirates and sub-emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. Andrew Hubbell has described this form of argument as the predatory state thesis, arguing that the simple distinction between the predatory states on the one hand and their victims on the other is grossly inadequate to explain the phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the decentralised societies were not passive victims of predatory action, but were sometimes participants in regional political economies. This kind of relationship existed between the peoples Akwanga and the sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a, which were established in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although the major relationship between the emirates and the "pagan" societies was slave raiding, many of the communities in Akwanga had shown themselves capable of militarily resisting the incursion of the Hausa-Fulani state-builders.

Robert Netting explores the relationship that exists between the Kofyar people of the Jos Plateau, their means of livelihood, and certain features of their social and cultural organisation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>34</sup> Netting's work is supplemented by Glenn Stone's research on the Settlement Ecology of the Kofyar people.<sup>35</sup> Stone's research was aimed at a better understanding of the linkages between the social and the spatial organisation of production. In many respects, Netting and Glenn's work can be applied to the Eggon in understanding their cultural ecology of self-sufficient agriculture.

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<sup>33</sup> A. Hubbell, "A View of the Slave Trade from the Margin: Souroudougou in the late Nineteenth Century Slave Trade of the Niger Bend," *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), pp.25-47.

<sup>34</sup> R. Netting, *Hill Farmers of Nigeria: Cultural Ecology of the Kofyar of Jos Plateau* (London, 1968).

<sup>35</sup> G.D. Stone, *Settlement Ecology: The Social and Spatial Organization of the Kofyar Agriculture* (Arizona, 1996).

Adamu Mahdi looks at the spread and influence of Hausa culture and the establishment of *Zangon Hausawa* (Hausa settlements) in West Africa.<sup>36</sup> The book, together with an earlier article, gives some information about the influence of Hausa culture in the development of the socio-political and economic structures of the people of central Nigeria.<sup>37</sup> According to Mahdi, the agents for the spread of Hausa culture in West Africa were the *malamai* and *yankasuwa*, (clerics/teachers and traders, respectively). Others included the artisans (blacksmiths, prostitutes, tailors and butchers), slaves, soldiers of fortune (*dakaru*), farmers and hunters.<sup>38</sup> The Sokoto jihad of 1804 and the emirates that were established as a consequence helped in the spread of Hausa culture into new frontiers like Keffi and Lafia.<sup>39</sup> These towns became the bases of operation of Hausa warriors, *malams*, traders and musicians. This was in addition to the existing Hausa settlements established by the eighteenth century in Lagos, Dahomey, Abomey and Kana. The extent of the Hausa influence especially in central Nigeria needs to be looked at in perspective, as his source of information about the people of the region is often from the eyes of the Hausa people that settled in these areas.

Colonial administrators that worked in the region wrote most published work that exists about the peoples of Akwanga. One of such early works was Sciortino's *Notes on Nasarawa Province*, published in 1920.<sup>40</sup> Sciortino looks at the process of British penetration into the region and the administrative structures that were established thereafter. However, he was more concerned with the history of native administration

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<sup>36</sup> Mahdi, *Hausa Factor*.

<sup>37</sup> A. Mahdi, "The Spread of the Hausa Culture in West Africa," *Savanna*, 5 (1976), pp.3-13.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, pp.9-12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

<sup>40</sup> J.C. Sciortino, *Notes on Nasarawa Province* (London, 1920).

and therefore concentrated on the emirates in the province at the expense of the peoples of Akwanga and other “tribal” groups. Similarly, Charles Temple edited a work on the peoples of northern Nigeria based on information compiled from official records.<sup>41</sup> He gave a sketchy overview of the history of the Eggon and Rindre people in no more than five pages.

A.G. Ames, following in the footsteps of Sciortino and Temple, published the *Gazetteer of Plateau Province*.<sup>42</sup> He gave a general description of the province treating each unit of the province (division) separately. In the section on Akwanga, he gave an overview of the process of British penetration into the area, the native administrative structure, religion and tribal laws of the local peoples. Although these works have some useful information about the peoples of Akwanga, their major weakness is that they were based on the uncritical use of reports obtained from Divisional Officers that worked in the region. In other words, they were cut and paste exercises, which were not based on systematic study of the people.

Although there is no systematic historical study of the peoples of Akwanga, there are isolated publications on the Eggon people. The first scholarly research to be published on the Eggon was a 1984 article on ritual warfare by David Dorward.<sup>43</sup> Dorward argued that the British conquest of the Eggon resulted in the cessation of the cycle of intercommunity ritual warfare that was central to their communal definition. According to him, a cycle of continuity gave way to an epoch of change and uncertainty. He maintained that colonial rule brought fundamental changes not only to political and

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<sup>41</sup> C.L. Temple (ed), *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria* (Lagos, 1922).

<sup>42</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*.

<sup>43</sup> D. Dorward, “Ritual Warfare and the Colonial Conquest of the Eggon,” *History in Africa*, 11 (1984), pp.83-98.

economic activities, but also to cultural norms and values. Dorward also wrote on the impact of colonialism on the economy of the Eggon people.<sup>44</sup> He observed that Eggon perceptions of past social and economic institutions are distorted by current practices. He argued that understanding current practices often bear little resemblance to past farming practices, crops systems, and the relative significance of specific crops. Hence, he argued that the current view that yam cultivation was the traditional mainstay of the Eggon economy is incorrect, as Tiv and Igbo railway labourers introduced the crop into the area in the late 1920s.

Kasimu Kigbu's publication on the Eggon people is a compilation of dissertations and theses from the University of Jos.<sup>45</sup> The first chapter, which was based on a dissertation by Kasimu, looks at the history of Eggon people at the turn of the twentieth century with emphasis on the social and political organisations and the relationship between the Eggon with their neighbours.<sup>46</sup> However, Kasimu failed to link the prevalence of the Eggon hill settlements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the activities of the sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a. Ignoring the development of these sub-emirates and how they affected the inter group relations and settlement patterns of the Eggon gives an inaccurate history of the local people in the nineteenth century. In other words, it is difficult to analyse the history of the Eggon people in the nineteenth century in isolation from the activities of these sub-emirates.

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<sup>44</sup> D. Dorward, "The Impact of Colonialism on a Nigerian Hill-Farming Society: A Case Study of Innovation among the Eggon," *The International Journal of Historical Studies*, 2 (1987), pp.201-224.

<sup>45</sup> K. Kigbu et al, *The Eggon of Central Nigeria* (Jos, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, pp.1-48.



## METHODOLOGY, SOURCES AND ORGANISATION

Jan Vansina defines oral tradition as “verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation.”<sup>47</sup> However, there are several problems with oral history. History is often used to justify situations or claims in the present. This usually leads to distortion or to the fabrication of traditions. As Hobsbawm and Ranger have observed, traditions, which “appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.”<sup>48</sup> Despite some of the weaknesses regarding oral history, it was a crucial source of information for this research. Oral information was collected by conducting interviews (individually or collectively) in parts of Nasarawa and Kaduna states. Interviews were conducted in Lafia, Keffi and Jama’a in order to ascertain the nature of the relationship that existed between these sub-emirates and the peoples of Akwanga. The people interviewed were mostly elders from different backgrounds, who because of their age were familiar with their history. The interviews were conducted mostly in Hausa and recorded, with transcripts written after the interview. Sometimes during my first visit, some of the informants immediately began to talk and I often recorded the conversation. Where the interview was formal, I began by asking the origin of the people and their history of migration. Individual interviews were conducted mostly in the houses of my informants while group interviews were held at the palaces of the Village or District Heads. Where possible, interviews were conducted more than twice and information was cross checked by raising the same question at different times or by reframing similar questions in different order.

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<sup>47</sup> J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Oxford, 1985), p.27.

<sup>48</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *Invention of Tradition*, p.1.



**Figure 0.1:** Some of my Eggon informants at Angbaku, March 2003

This research also utilised archival records from the Public Records Office, London and the National Archives at Kaduna, Nigeria, for documents covering colonial correspondence and administrative policies and practices. The bulk of the archival work was carried out in Nigeria because detailed divisional records are kept there, while only summaries of despatches are deposited at the PRO. The summaries of despatches only reflects on important events that happened in the provinces/regions in general and since this research was on a division, it became necessary to go through both the details and summaries of these reports. Nevertheless, the PRO holds an enormous amount of information on the decolonisation period and on the colonial government's official policies, as well as military and intelligence reports on northern Nigeria. Focusing on the archives gave an insight into the initial colonial encounter, although such records were only in fragments. The records were expressions of how colonial administrators perceived the local people and, as such, have to be considered with care. In other words,

most of the documents were not written for the local people, but were aimed at readers in Britain. What was observed by the colonial administrators and committed into writing became official knowledge, and therefore, keen observation became central to what they did. The archives at Kew and Kaduna also have a collection of records regarding schools, missions, mines, health, transport and police, all of which were essential for this research.

Mission records constituted another important primary source used in this study. Although mission work started later in Akwanga than in the other parts of Nigeria, it served greatly to increase the amount of first-hand documentation about the people of the region. The history of Christian mission in northern Nigeria began with the activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the immediate aftermath of colonial conquest. The CMS began their mission amongst the Hausa at the beginning of the twentieth century, but local and administrative pressures meant that the missionaries had to refocus their attention to the numerous “pagan” communities of central Nigeria. The Sudan United Mission (SUM) dominated missionary activities amongst the peoples that were later incorporated into Plateau province in 1926. Much of what the missionaries observed and recorded gives important insights into the people they were dealing with and their annual letters to the mission headquarters are an important source of material. Once a year the mission headquarters wished to hear directly from their missionaries. These letters were used in the compilation of the annual report, which was directed to people back in the mission’s country of origin in order to advertise their work, satisfy their donors and to solicit recruits and funds. For these records, this research relied on the SUM records from the Centre for Christianity in the Non-Western World at the

University of Edinburgh. The South African branch of the SUM dominated mission work in Akwanga, but their archive in Cape Town was closed at the time of writing this thesis. However, I benefited from Mr. Alexander of Cape Town, who was able to contact on my behalf some of the missionaries who had insights on some of the SUM records. The British branch of the SUM was the representative of the branches of the mission under a field secretary and their archival documents were an important source of information on the mission's dealings with the colonial government in Nigeria and the Colonial Office in London.

Another important primary source were the memoirs of Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, a District Officer in Akwanga between 1922 and 1927. Although only some of these letters were published in his biography, I am grateful to Professor Richard Rathbone who gave me his personal copies of the letters of Arden-Clarke. These letters recorded Arden-Clarke's personal observations, as opposed to those in his official reports, which in some instances were contradictory. Official colonial documents were often censored and often camouflage the truths that were often clearly stated in private letters. Arden-Clarke was born in India in 1898 to a missionary of the CMS.<sup>49</sup> He left school in 1917, joined the army and served with the Machine Gun Corps in France. In 1920, he joined the colonial service, arriving in Nigeria in December 1921 and being posted to Jama'a, the Provincial Headquarters of Nasarawa. In 1922, he was transferred to Akwanga as an Assistant District Officer where he served (with intervals) until 1927. In 1936 he left Nigeria for Bechuanaland, finally becoming the last governor of the Gold Coast in 1949. He was one of the longest serving political officers in Akwanga and his intimate knowledge of the area makes his assessment reports and letters important for

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<sup>49</sup> D. Rooney, *Sir Charles Arden-Clarke* (London, 1982), pp.1-19.

this research. His annual reports on Akwanga are the most detailed and comprehensive deposited at the National Archive in Kaduna.

The research covers the period from the beginning of formal British administration in 1911 to the end of colonial rule with the independence of Nigeria in 1960. Before 1910, only sporadic attempts had been made to enter into Akwanga and it was in 1911 that Mr. A. Campbell Irons became the first administrator. The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first looks at the early history of the peoples of Akwanga with emphasis on their political, religious and economic organisation. It also discusses the effect of the nineteenth-century Sokoto jihad on settlement patterns in the region. Chapter 2 deals with resistance to the colonial conquest, which lasted up to 1925. Chapter 3 discusses the development of the indirect rule system and native administration, focusing on the creation of chiefs, divisional boundaries and the native administrative policies pursued by successive Governors of Nigeria. Chapter 4 looks at taxation and cash crop production and their impact on the peoples of Akwanga. Chapter 5 examines the use of local labour for building the infrastructure of colonial rule and for tin mining, which dominated the economy of Plateau province. Chapter 6 discusses the religious encounter between Islam, Christianity and indigenous belief and how these two world religions shaped the political identity of the people of the region. Chapter 7 focuses on the demise of indirect rule and the emergence party politics with emphasis on minority politics and the use of religion in politics and process of decolonisation in Akwanga.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **AKWANGA IN THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD**

This chapter examines the history of the peoples of Akwanga in the nineteenth century with emphasis on their traditions of origin, political, economic and social organisation and local ecology. It will also examine the relationship between the peoples of the region and the Hausa-Fulani state builders, who established new settlements at Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a in the early nineteenth century as a consequence of the Sokoto jihad. The emergence of these sub-emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate had important political, economic, demographic and social implications for the Akwanga region.

This chapter aims to contribute to the debate on the nature of the relationship between the centralised and decentralised societies in what would later become northern Nigeria. As noted in the introduction, it was previously thought that the development of militarised states in West African savannah was associated with the transfer of population from the decentralised societies to their centralised neighbours. The decentralised societies were presented as helpless victims of depredation. The simple distinction between the predators and their victims is too simplistic. This chapter emphasises the complexity of the relationships between the emirates and the peoples of Akwanga. It will be argued that the peoples of Akwanga were able to effectively defend themselves from the depredation of the Hausa-Fulani state builders, while others paid tributes or allied with the intruders in order to safeguard their independence.

## ECOLOGY AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF AKWANGA

Akwanga lies to the southwest of the escarpment of the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria. Jos Plateau is a boot-shaped highland area which covers an area of some 3000 square miles at a level of about 4200 feet above sea level and surrounded by high plains with altitudes ranging from 2000 to 3000 feet above sea level.<sup>1</sup> The area is geologically representative of the Pre-Cambrian Basement Complex, the ancient group of crystalline rocks which form part of the main African continental mass.<sup>2</sup> The crystalline rocks include those carrying minerals, such as tinstone, columbite and gold. Climatic conditions are characterised by two distinct seasons. The dry season usually lasts from November to March and is characterised by the predominance of north-easterly trade winds which brings with them harmattan dust. The rainy season lasts from April to October and the period is dominated by south westerly winds and tropical maritime air mass. The Jos Plateau is classified as Northern Guinea Savanna and although the vegetation has been a continuous cover of broad-leafed species, long established agricultural use has turned much of the area around villages into open grassland. Intensive farming with short fallow periods and persistent firewood collection are the practices which prevents regeneration of tree growth. Trees that continue to flourish in the area are almost all economically useful species growing in tilled areas and these include the palm trees, locust beans and mango.

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<sup>1</sup> Udo, *Geographical Regions*, p.127.

<sup>2</sup> Buchanan and Pugh, *Land and People*, p.1.







Eggon, which describes the people and their language, occupied the southern part of Akwanga. They are located some thirty miles southwest of the Jos Plateau and are bordered in the north and east by the Mada and Rindre respectively. In the nineteenth century, the sub-emirates of Lafia and Keffi were established in the south and southwest of the Eggon. The Eggon hills rise abruptly 600 to 1000 feet from the surrounding plains. The Arikya River cuts within a few hundred yards of the hills' northeastern escarpment, while to the west the hills are skirted by the Mada River. The plains, particularly those to the south, are etched with a network of tributary streams which are subject to flash flooding caused by sudden run-off from the face of the hills. The dominant fault lines of the hills themselves appear to run from the northeast to southeast, the northwest half being very broken, with numerous peaks in excess of 2,800 feet. In the southeast half, the land is more open and level, forming a high bluff with precipitous sides dropping 600 to 80 feet to the plains. Finally, there is a line of isolated mountains, 1,200 to 1,340 feet high, extending eastward from the Eggon hills.

The Eggon are the largest ethnic group in Akwanga. Their population was estimated in 1907 at 7,678, which rose to 17,916 by 1930.<sup>4</sup> Eggon people had no generic name for themselves before the advent of British rule. In the nineteenth century, the Hausa-Fulani and the Kanuri that settled in Keffi and Lafia called them *Madan dutse* (Hill Mada), which describes their hill settlement. The name "Hill Mada" was adopted by the British when they arrived in the region and was later changed to Eggon in 1930 after the re-organisation of Akwanga. According to Mr. Hunter-Shaw, a District Officer of the area in 1935, "Eggon, their word for a mountain group, being a name '*faute de*

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

*mieux*' [for want of any better] applied to them by the administration."<sup>5</sup> However, not all Eggon lived on the hills as some also occupied lowland settlements such as Ubbe, Ginda, Alushi and Bakyno Kassa. The Eggon are made up of three major clans, namely, Eggon Anzo, Eggon Eholo and Eggon Enro. Although they speak the same language (with slight dialectical variations), they are distinguished from one another by their facial marks. The Eggon Enro had nine marks on the face, three on the forehead and three each on either side of their mouth. Both the Anzo and Eholo clans had vertical marks made on either side of their cheeks but were normally not numbered. Eggon Enro are referred to by the Hausa-Fulani as *Madan Tara* (Eggon with nine marks) while the Eholo and Anzo who had vertical marks were called *Madan Zube* (Mada with vertical marks).<sup>6</sup>

The northern part of Akwanga is home to the Mada people. The term "Mada" also describes both the people and their language. They are bordered in the south and east by the Eggon and Rindre and the sub-emirates of Jama'a and Keffi in the north and west respectively. The western part is undulating with a few low hills and occasional dense belts of forests. The outstanding features of the landscape are the twin peaks of the Wawaye hills, which rise from the surrounding plain to a height of about 3000 feet above sea level. The Mada population was estimated in 1912 at 6,833 people and had risen to 18,216 by 1928.<sup>7</sup> Before the advent of the British, the Mada had no collective name for themselves, but described each other by their settlements, for example, *mane*

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<sup>5</sup> NAK Jos Prof 488, Volume II: The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of Intelligence Report on, 1935.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Laka Bako at Ahgbor, 13 March 2004.

<sup>7</sup> NAK KAL MIN number 20749: Nunku District, 1933, NAK, SNP 17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division by Masterton Smith, 1928. It would be misleading to rely on this figure because during the same period, some of the Mada people were under the central Mada District. A more reliable estimate would be after the 1922 re-organisation.

*ban Gbunje* (people of Gbunje or Gwanje) and *mane ban Gbunchu* (people of Gbunchu). Like their southern neighbours the Eggon, the Hausa-Fulani that settled in Keffi and Jam'a referred to them as *Madan Kassa* (plain Mada), which was later adopted and used by the British. As to the meaning of "Mada," it conveys nothing either in Hausa or in the language of the local people. However, most of my Mada informants maintained that they knew themselves by the name "Mada" before any contact with the Hausa-Fulani and the British. According to Baba Loko, "we know ourselves as *ban Mada* [Mada people] and it is wrong to suggest that the name was given to us by anybody."<sup>8</sup> He argued that the Hausa-Fulani and the British could not properly pronounce the term "Mada" which resulted in the adulteration of the name. The term "Mada" according to him is pronounced with the first 'a' short and the second 'a' long with the stress on the second syllable 'M'da.'<sup>9</sup> However, it is evident from the early colonial records that apart from some of the Mada villages that had contacts with the Europeans or Hausa, the rest of the *Madan kassa* villages seemed ignorant of the term "Mada."<sup>10</sup>

The Rindre occupy the eastern part of Akwanga and are found in Wamba, Waju, Gitta, Kangbo and Konva. Describing the area in 1915, Mr. Mathews, an Assistant District Officer, wrote: "it is roughly rectangular in shape, about 19 miles from North to South and 14 miles from East to West and 250 square miles in area."<sup>11</sup> Their population was estimated at 8,480 people in 1915.<sup>12</sup> Their neighbours call them "Nungu," which was a Hausa derivative of the Rindre word *ungu* [an expression for someone that is in

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Baba Loko at Ungwan Loko, 8 November 2003.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061: Mada District-Administration of, 1922.

<sup>11</sup> NAK SNP 10/555p: Nasarawa Province, Nungu Independent District, Lafia Division, Assessment Report, 1915.

<sup>12</sup> NAK, SNP K/555: Nasarawa Province, Lafia Division, Assessment Report by Mr. Mathews, 1915.

desperate need].<sup>13</sup> The word is said to have come into being when some Hausa hunters lost their way in the Wamba area and were looking tired and hungry but could not relate their situation to the local people. The Rindre man was only able to show his sympathy by saying *ungu* and the Hausa hunters misunderstood the term to be “Nungu.”<sup>14</sup> The Hausa hunters thought therefore that *ungu* meant Nungu, the name and language of the people.

The north-eastern part of Akwanga is occupied by the Arum, Chessu, Kantana, Turkwan, Yashi and Buh, who inhabit the settlements of Jinni, Marhai, Kpara, Jidda, Abu, Nakere and Turkwan. The area is “roughly to the shape of a right angled...and its approximately 285 square miles of which 120 square miles lie on the West side and 165 square miles lie on the East side of Farin Rau [sic] River.”<sup>15</sup> The general level of the northern half of the area is about 1600 to 1800 feet above sea level. The peoples in the area spoke different languages and had varying traditions and were lumped together and called Mama until the 1920s.<sup>16</sup> The name “Mama” has its origin in the nineteenth century when the Hausa-Fulani gave the name to describe the vegetation of the area, which was later adopted by the British. Mama is a Hausa word for breast, which was used by the Hausa to describe a tree in the area, *nonon Giwa* (elephant breast), which was subsequently used to call the people.<sup>17</sup>

Just when the groups in the region came to live there is impossible to say, but evidence of human habitation of the Jos plateau region goes back to the Sangoan or even

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<sup>13</sup> Rindre is the language name that describes the people and the British inter-changeably used Nungu or Lindre (sic).

<sup>14</sup> Interview at Wamba with Philip Maiangwa, 17 May 2003.

<sup>15</sup> NAK SNP 831:Mama District, Lafia Division, Nasarawa Province, Re-Assessment Report by H.F. Mathews, 1923.

<sup>16</sup> NAK CSO/12601/Volume 5: Akwanga Division Annual Report by Hale Middleton, 1927.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mohammed Yakubu at Mama, 20 April 2004.

Achulean periods between 250, 000-90, 000 BC.<sup>18</sup> A linguistic and ethnographic survey of the area suggests that the peoples who inhabited the Jos plateau region at the beginning of the twentieth century had been living there for at least several hundred of years.<sup>19</sup> However, it is difficult to say with certainty whether the groups who occupied the Jos Plateau by the beginning of the twentieth century were the direct forebears of the pre-historic civilization revealed by archeological evidence.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the groups in the region have a common tradition of origin, migration and settlement. Amongst the Eggon people, decent from a common ancestor with the neighbouring Rindre people is claimed in an episode analogous to the Jacob-Esau legend in the Bible. One version of the tradition has it that the founders of the Eggon and Rindre settlements came from an unknown land in the southeast under the leadership of Abro, born of the sky god. Abro was accompanied by his brothers, Jada Oku and Ubina [founders and folk heroes of the Rindre people]. Jada and Ubina crossed the Arikya River to establish their settlement at Wamba while Abro remained south, turning west and eventually founding Arugwadu on one of the outlying mountains.<sup>21</sup> While Abro was out hunting with his three sons, Abe, Anzo and Affro, he found a lost boy wandering near the Arikya River, who he adopted and named Eholo, meaning river. Eholo later got married and had children in Abro's house. Eholo tried unsuccessfully to deprive his

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<sup>18</sup> S.G.H. Daniels, "The Early Stone Age" in T. Shaw (ed), *Lectures in Nigerian Prehistory and Archaeology* (Ibadan, 1969), pp.14-29, R.C. Soper, "The Stone Age in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN)*, 3 (1965), pp.175-194; B.E. Fagg, "The Nok Culture in Prehistory," *JHSN* 1 (1959), pp.228-293.

<sup>19</sup> J.A. Ballard, "Historical Inferences from the Linguistic Geography of the Nigerian Middle Belt," *Africa* 41 (1971), pp.294-305; J.H. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington, 1966), p.46.

<sup>20</sup> Professor Richard Fardon: Personal communication.

<sup>21</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, pp. 260-262; NAK SNP K. 3234: Notes on the Eggon, South Mada by Masterton Smith, 1929; NAK SNP 23691: Intelligence Report on the Eggon Tribal Area by J. Hunter-Shaw, 1935.

foster brothers of their birthright and fled to settle at Wana while Anzo in pursuit of him eventually settled at Alogani. In a series of interviews conducted in the 1930s by Mr Shaw, the District Officer of Akwanga, very few elders traced their descent back to Abro through eight to ten generations, thus placing the date of the exodus from the southeast to about 1700. He concluded that the Eggon and Rindre people were at one time part of the Jukun kingdom of Kwararafa.<sup>22</sup> However, it should be noted that in the colonial period, writers tended to see Jukun influence everywhere. The concept of a common home already mentioned in the introduction should not be taken literally. Rather it is a symbolic expression of a culture which they share.

There has been no archaeological research in the Eggon hills, but the first microliths recognised in Nigeria in 1931 were found at Wana (in heart of the Eggon hills) by Reverend Hepburn, a missionary of the Sudan United Mission.<sup>23</sup> Similar stone implements were excavated by Bernard Fagg at Rop (less than 200 kilometres from Wana) and the early dates for the late stone age falls around 5000 to 6000 BC, (but in some parts of Nigeria, it is suggested that the period can be dated back to 10,000 B.C).<sup>24</sup> Similar findings suggest that the Eggon hills were an ancient settlement site. In the Rindre area, one of the archaeological finds was the Nok terracotta head found in Wamba. The period during which the Nok heads were made had been estimated as between 900 BC and 200 AD. Moreover, clay figures depicting tools, bodily ornaments, hairstyles and the exploitation of oil palm tree have been recovered from many sites

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<sup>22</sup> NAK SNP 23691: Intelligence Report on the Eggon Tribal Area by J. Hunter-Shaw, 1935.

<sup>23</sup> T. Shaw, *Nigeria: Its Archaeology and Early History* (London, 1978), p.39.

<sup>24</sup> S.G.H. Daniels, "The Middle and Late Stone Age," T. Shaw (ed), *Nigeria Prehistory and Archaeology* (Ibadan, 1969), pp.23-9.

spanning from Nok, Kafanchan, through Wamba to Katsina-Ala.<sup>25</sup> This archaeological evidence suggests that settlements in the area are longstanding and the present-day populations appear to be autochthonous.

Arum, Chessu, Turkwan and Yashi have a common tradition of origin and migration. From the interviews conducted in these villages, my informants were in agreement that they have a common route of migration. According to an informant, “before we came to this place, we first of all settled down at Aphia Cha. All these groups [Chessu, Turkwan and Yashi] passed through Aphia Cha before moving to their present site.”<sup>26</sup>

Although the groups in Akwanga spoke different languages from each other, this did not hinder inter-group relations amongst them. The nature of inter-group relations was manifested in their social, political and religious lives. Religion was a medium that cemented the relationship of the peoples of the region. Traditional religious ceremonies were organised to appease the gods and the spirits of the ancestors, to pray for protection and also to celebrate good, drought-free harvests. These occasions were usually celebrated with the consumption of *burukutu* (local beer), followed by dancing and rituals conducted by the elders in secret. The Mada, Rindre and Kantana attend the Likiya festival, which is organised by the Eggon people to mark the end of the harvest season while the *Ruchi Kubo* farming festival to instill discipline among the Rindre people was adopted by the Buh and Chessu.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I. James (ed), *The Settler Phenomenon in the Middle Belt and the Problem of National Integration in Nigeria* (Jos, 1998), p.32.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with the late Musa Gun at Wamba, 22 May 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Group interview at Angbaku with Kuje Kigbu, Ablika Gabi and Tsaku Musa, 1 March 2004; Interview at Abu with Dauda Madaki, 16 December 2003.

Trade was another factor that encouraged inter-group relations, although there was only a low level of exchange among the different regions. This was partly because they produced similar products and also because there was no cheap and efficient transport system. Specialization in the production of crafts was one avenue for inter-household and inter-community exchanges. Local trade was also practiced between households on a direct basis when one household exchanged an item which it had in excess for another which is required. This was carried out mostly on a barter basis between households.<sup>28</sup> Despite the low level of exchange, there were markets in pre-colonial period that brought the communities in Akwanga together. For example, the markets in Ngapwar and Andaha attracted people from Keffi, Jama'a and Wamba.<sup>29</sup> The markets in Wakama, Wana and Agidi did not only attract the Eggon but also people from Lafia, Wamba and Garaku.<sup>30</sup> The peoples of Akwanga also had trading relations with those of the Jos escarpment. Mr. Mathews, the District Officer of Akwanga described the nature of trade in the western parts of the division in 1922:

The Mama pagans' only requirement which they do not produce for themselves are, meat, salt and hoes. The hoes were obtained from certain Plateau villages which specialize in making them. They get their salt by barter through middlemen from the south. The salt is produced from the brine springs at Keana and Awe...Cattle were obtained from

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<sup>28</sup> Interview at Gwanje Bishu with Bala Maisha, 14 November 2003. Amongst the Eggon, ingots were used as means of payments and exchange and were also used by the local blacksmiths.

<sup>29</sup> Interview at Andaha with the late Dauda Rija, 12 March 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Interview at Endehu with Likita Abimiku, 15 November 2004.



the Plateau having passed through a chain of middlemen. In exchange they pay palm oil, guinea corn and honey.<sup>31</sup>

Inter-group relations were also expressed through marriages. The importance of marriage in predominantly agriculturalist economies was great. This was because marriage led to an increase in the size of the family, which was the basic social and economic unit and women were valued both as workers and child-bearers.<sup>32</sup> The early colonial census has shown that women were in the minority compared with men amongst the different groups in Akwanga.<sup>33</sup> This meant that men that could not find women to marry within their groups had to look outside their villages to contract marriage. For instance, the Eggon people from Alushi found it convenient to marry from their neighbouring Mada villages.<sup>34</sup> Inter-group marriages helped to reduce conflict between the groups and also encouraged strong relationships.

#### **RELATIONS WITH THE SUB-EMIRATES OF KEFFI, JAMA'A AND LAFIA**

The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed a violent Islamic revolution in present-day northern Nigeria which resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. The impact of the Caliphate on Akwanga region came about through the creation of the sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a. Although the jihad was fought mainly in Hausaland, the effects of the war were felt by the people in the central Nigeria region and down as far as the tropical rainforest in the south. The jihad was fought under

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<sup>31</sup> NAK SNP 831/1923: Reassessment of Mama District, 1922.

<sup>32</sup> J. Goody, *Production and Reproduction*, (Cambridge, 1976), p.33.

<sup>33</sup> NAK SNP 10/572p: Nasarawa Province, Assessment Report, 1913.

<sup>34</sup> Interview at Alushi with Reverend Mari on 22 May 2004.

the leadership of a Fulani cleric, Usman Dan Fodio. He was born at Maratta in Gobir in 1754 to a father who earned the Fulani name of *Fodiye* (the learned) through teaching.<sup>35</sup> The origin of the Sokoto jihad has been sufficiently dealt with by scholars and only needs mentioning here briefly.<sup>36</sup> Central to the emergence of the reform movement were the political, economic, religious and social conditions in Hausaland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There was a general dissatisfaction with the Hausa governments of the day and corruption and oppression were common. Although these grievances were political and economic in nature, they were articulated in religious terms.

One of the immediate consequences of the jihad was the change in the rulers' title from *Sarki* (king), to emir, signalling the dawn of a new Islamic era. In other words, the rule of emirs replaced the secular Hausa regimes. Another major consequence of the jihad was the demographic changes it brought about, which were far-reaching and revolutionary. The conquest and incorporation of many areas into the Caliphate set in motion processes of migration from one area to another. In some cases, it involved movement from relatively low-lying plains to hills and mountains for security against the consequent slave raiding as a result of the jihad. The jihad also resulted in the establishment of the sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a, which subsequently became thorns in the flesh of many communities of Akwanga in the nineteenth century. The relationship between these sub-emirates and the peoples of Akwanga determined

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<sup>35</sup> M.D. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London, 1967), p.3.

<sup>36</sup> A.M. Kani, *The Intellectual Origin of the Sokoto Jihad in Nigeria* (London, 1988); M. Bello, *Infakul Maisuri*, translated and paraphrased by E.J. Arnett, as *The Rise of the Sokoto Fulani* (Kano, 1922); Last, *Sokoto Caliphate*; R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies, 1804-1905* (Second Edition: London, 1977); J.P. Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1977).

internal migration and settlement patterns. In order to fully understand the nature of the relationship between the peoples of Akwanga with their powerful neighbours, we turn first to the emergence of the settlements of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a and their relations with their overlords, the emirates of Zaria and Bauchi.

Although nomadic Fulani herdsmen had long visited the area that later became Keffi, they only began to settle at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Before the outbreak of the Sokoto jihad, Muhammad Gani, a Fulani from Zanga, used to bring his herds from Katsina every dry season to graze in the area. This annual cattle grazing was continued by his son Abdullahi Zanga, who then decided to settle permanently. He eventually persuaded his other Fulani kinsmen to live under him. They finally settled in 1802, built a stockade village and named it Keffi (stockade). Zanga then appointed Umaru as his deputy.<sup>38</sup> When the jihad broke out at Gobir in 1804, Usman Dan Fodio sent messages to all Fulani leaders and Abdullahi Zanga decided to go to Sokoto to obtain a flag for himself. He was prevented from obtaining it directly from Sokoto and was compelled to accept authority from Zaria. The first emir of Zaria (or Zazzau) *Malam* Musa, made it clear to Zanga that the area around Keffi and beyond was granted to him as fief by the Caliph, and therefore by accepting the authority Zaria, Keffi became its vassal.<sup>39</sup>

The establishment of Jama'a sub-emirate was a little different to that of Keffi. Before the outbreak of the jihad, *malam* Usman, who was an Islamic preacher from

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<sup>37</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, p.5.

<sup>38</sup> S.J. Hogben and A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria: A Preliminary Survey of their Historical Traditions* (London, 1966), p.530; Sciortino, *Nasarawa*, p.6; Mahdi, *Hausa Factor*, pp.101-104.

<sup>39</sup> Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, p.531.

Kebbi in Zamfara, went to preach to the Fulani who had settled in Kajuru (southern Zaria) and with the help of the local Fulani leader, Abdurrahman (Atona) organised them into a cohesive group.<sup>40</sup> After the defeat of Makau (*Sarkin* Zaria) by the Fulani in 1808, the *sarki* and his supporters escaped to Kajuru. The Fulani continued their attack for six months until Makau moved towards Zuba. As a result, the people of Kajuru became anxious and decided to eliminate any immediate danger by killing the herdsmen that had settled amongst them.<sup>41</sup> The plot to kill the Fulani was leaked to them by Indema, the Fulani wife of *Sarkin* Kajuru; therefore most of the Fulani escaped and settled in the Darroro hills. The people of Kajuru, in a frantic effort to drive out the Fulani, were defeated by them and scattered. After this victory, the Fulani sent *Malam* Usman to Zaria to obtain a flag and a name for the new settlement from *Malam* Musa, the emir of Zazzau.<sup>42</sup> These requests were granted and when the emir asked them who they were, they replied that they were a gathering (*Jama'a*) of Fulani of Darroro. The emir then named the settlement *Jama'an Darroro* (the gathering of Darroro) in 1810 and it also became a vassal of Zazzau.<sup>43</sup>

Lastly, Lafia owes its origin to one Dunama who led a group of traders from Borno and settled in the area in the eighteenth century.<sup>44</sup> After several journeys, they settled down and with the assistance of *Sarkin* Kwandare captured the town of Anane. The *Sarkin* Kwandare was delighted and wished them to stay comfortably (*Laftiya*), which subsequently became the name of their settlement.<sup>45</sup> M.G. Smith suggested that

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.551.

<sup>41</sup> S.J. Hogben, *An Introduction to the History of the Islamic States of Northern Nigeria* (London, 1967), p.312.

<sup>42</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, p.13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *Emirates*, p.553

<sup>44</sup> Hogben, *History of the Islamic States*, p.306.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Lafia had been a vassal state of Zaria until 1812, when it was transferred to the emir of Bauchi, although there seems to be no evidence to support this claim.<sup>46</sup> The vassalage which bound Lafia to Bauchi, started in about 1817, when the emir of Bauchi, *malam* Yakubu, raided the town and besieged it for over two weeks. On the sixteenth day of the siege, the emir of Lafia, *malam* Umar (1814-1819), led a surprise attack on Yakubu and captured the emir's drum.<sup>47</sup> *Malam* Umar knew that Lafia could not withstand the Bauchi forces for the second time and decided to send his *madaki* to negotiate terms of peace with Yakubu. It was after an agreement was reached that the emir "acknowledged Umar as his vassal and presented him with a flag and the captured drum."<sup>48</sup> The ruler of Lafia then agreed to send annual tributes to Bauchi. This clearly shows that the relationship between Lafia and Bauchi began five years later than Smith suggested.

The nature of the relationship between Sokoto, the emirates and the sub-emirates was complex. For example, Zaria was a vassal of Sokoto, and had several vassals of its own. According to Smith, there were important differences in the relationship between Sokoto and Zazzau on one hand and Zazzau and its vassals on the other. He argued that Sokoto intervened in various ways in the internal affairs of Zaria, while Zaria on the other hand did not have a voice in the affairs of its vassals.<sup>49</sup> The extent of Sokoto's control over Zaria was firstly demonstrated by the deposition of its rulers in 1860, 1873, 1881 and 1890 and Smith argued that by 1863 it was fair to suggest that the "sultan of Sokoto had appropriated powers to appoint and dethrone the rulers of Zaria."<sup>50</sup> While it

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<sup>46</sup> M.G. Smith, *Government in Zazzau 1800-1950* (London, 1960), p.72; a view also held by Hogben and Kirk-Greene. Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *Emirates*, p.545.

<sup>47</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, p.11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Zazzau*, p.72.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p.75.

is true that Sokoto had a say in the internal affairs of Zaria, it is untrue to suggest that Zaria did not interfere in the internal affairs of its vassals. For example, in 1885, the emir of Zaria deposed Adamu, the then ruler of Jama'a, who was accused of drunkenness.<sup>51</sup> There were also similar depositions in Jama'a in 1850, 1881 and 1888 by the emirs of Zaria. Bauchi emirate also intervened in the internal affairs of Lafia. For example, during the reign of Mohammed Agwe (1881-1903) of Lafia, one of his aides, Mammadi Chillum, marched on the palace and demanded the resignation of the emir. Mohammed fled to Bauchi and eighteen months later, Mammadi and the elders of Lafia were summoned by the emir, *malam* Umaru, who decided to imprison them and to order a return to the status quo.<sup>52</sup>

The supervision of Zaria by the authorities in Sokoto was done through the *Waziri* (vizier) of Sokoto who was responsible for the collection of tributes that were made twice to the Caliph during the Muslim festivals of *Id-el-Kabir* and *Id-el-Fitr*. On such occasions, the emirs of Zaria were expected to visit Sokoto, taking with them tributes in the form of slaves and horses. The Sultan of Sokoto had the right to inherit parts of the property left by emirs; in the case of a deposed ruler, he received half his slaves and cattle. In Zaria, as described by Smith, apart from the tributes sent to Sokoto (one-fifth of such tribute was appropriated by the *Waziri* of Sokoto), levies of grain were collected for the *Waziri* on his annual visits to Zaria. By 1860, it became customary for the newly appointed emirs of Zaria to make donations to Sokoto, known as *kudin sarauta* (money of taking office), to the Sultan and *Waziri*.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *Emirates*, p.545.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *Zazzau*, pp.73-76.

As already mentioned, the sub-emirates of Keffi and Jama'a were vassals of Zaria while Lafia became a vassal of Bauchi. The rulers of Keffi and Jama'a were linked to the emir of Zaria through an intermediary or *kofa* ("door"), who was usually a titled official from Zaria. *Limamin* Jama'a originally supervised the vassal state of Jama'a while Keffi was placed under *Alhaji* Musa, an untitled *malam* and pilgrim. The Madakin Zazzau later supervised both.<sup>54</sup> It was through these intermediaries that Keffi and Jama'a submitted their tributes to the emir of Zazzau. The vassals paid *gandu* (tributes) rather than *haraji* (tax) and Zaria expected a hundred slaves to be given annually from its larger vassals like Keffi.<sup>55</sup> The emir of Zaria enforced the collection of tributes by military means if they had not been paid for three consecutive years. For example, in 1873, the emir of Zaria, Abdullahi, personally raided Keffi when the annual tribute had fallen into arrears and this led to his deposition because the enforced collection did not receive the blessing or approval of the Sultan.<sup>56</sup>

These sub-emirates became military outposts for operations against the peoples of Akwanga. The emirates of Zaria and Bauchi allowed their vassals to make war independently on "pagan" communities, but not on each other.

The military operations that were carried out by these sub-emirates had nothing to do with the spread of Islam but used merely to obtain slaves and other booty. When the jihad was started at Sokoto, the issue of slavery and slave raiding was clearly defined by Mohammed Bello. He divided people into three categories, which included: "pure Muslims"; "those that have mingled heathen and Moslem practices" and those of

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.79.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>56</sup> Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *Emirates*, 533; Smith, *Zazzau*, pp.77-78; Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*, p.80.

“heathen origin” or “pagans.” The latter, he made clear, could legally be enslaved, “their children and women...taken and their property divided.”<sup>57</sup> According to Humphrey Fisher, Islamic law, on the one hand, “forbids any Muslim to enslave a co-religionist. On the other hand, jihad directed against non-Muslims, was approved by the *shariah* and might, in some circumstances, be a positive duty.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, slavery could be viewed as a “simile for the heathen condition – a symbolic representation of the very antithesis of Islam.”<sup>59</sup> The interpretation(s) of Islamic law on slavery reveals a contradiction in itself because the jihad in its effort to free men from unbelief became a device to deprive them of freedom.<sup>60</sup> The sub-emirates were uninterested in the conversion of their “pagan” neighbours, as it would affect the supply of slaves and tributes.

The result of slave raiding was on-going conflict between the peoples of Akwanga and the sub-emirates, which early British officials considered to be inter-tribal wars. Mr. Lawrence, the Assistant Resident of Lafia, described the effects of slave raids on settlement patterns and inter-group relations when he wrote about the Eggon people in 1913: “they freely admitted that up to a short time ago, they killed any Hausa they could catch and said that it was right since their fathers did the same and that the Hausa had driven them from the plains.”<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to say when the Eggon began their upward movement to the hills, but such migration probably predates the jihad. The prevalence of sleeping sickness and other endemic diseases along the watercourses on

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<sup>57</sup> M. Bello, *Infiaq al-Maysur*, quoted by M. Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (London, 1937), p.50.

<sup>58</sup> H. J. Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (London, 2001), p.46.

<sup>59</sup> J.R. Willis (ed), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: Islam and the Ideology of Enslavement* (London, 1985), p.4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.16.

<sup>61</sup> NAK SNP 10 338p: Assessment Report on the Mada sub-District of the Mada District of Lafia Division, 1913.



the plains was one of the factors that encouraged the movement of the Eggon people to the hills. As observed by Glover and Aitchison, although slave raiding was a major cause of population movement, other possible factors were the presence of diseases like trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and onchocerciasis (river blindness).<sup>62</sup>

However, this upward movement was intensified during the nineteenth century for security reasons as a result of raids from the sub-emirates. Most of the raids took place either at the beginning or the end of the rainy season, when people were most vulnerable as they came to the plains to cultivate their land. In the 1860s, the father of the emir of Keffi raided the Eggon village of Angbaku and several boys and a young girl were taken captive.<sup>63</sup> He kept the young girl as his concubine and in 1880 she gave birth to a son, Bashayi, who later became the first District Head of the central district of Akwanga. In 1880, the emir of Zaria himself also conducted a raiding expedition in the area, which had a devastating effect on the people of the village of Angbaku.<sup>64</sup> Present-day elders interviewed mentioned that during the course of the raids, the “horsemen” took over two-thirds of the villagers as slaves to Keffi and Zaria.<sup>65</sup> During the nineteenth century, there were two settlements at Angbaku. The majority of the people settled on the plains, while a few people could be found in the nearby forest. In the course of the raids, the settlement on the plain was completely wiped out and the survivors were those that had settled in the forest.<sup>66</sup> In order to protect themselves from the raids, those that

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<sup>62</sup> P.E. Glover and P.J. Aitchison, “Some Causes of Depopulation in Northern Nigeria,” *Nigerian Field*, 10 (1969), pp.551-64.

<sup>63</sup> NAK SNP10/572p: Nasarawa Province, Keffi-Mada District Assessment Report, 1913.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Arughen Oge Angbaku Karami, Enje Ughe, Tsaku Musa, Abliku Gabi and Kuje Kigbu at Angbaku, 1 and 6 March 2004.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

settled in forest dug defensive trenches, evidence of which still exists. Scouts were also sent out to watch for unwelcome visitors approaching the village.<sup>67</sup>



**Figure 1.1:** Village of Angbaku that survived the slave raids from Keffi and Zaria



**Figure 1.2:** Settlement site of Angbaku that was wiped out in the nineteenth century

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

In the northern parts of Akwanga, the sub-emirates also raided the Mada people. According to an informant, Sidi Tide:

My grandparents told me that the Mada people suffered from raids from Keffi, led by the *magaji*. They raided the Mada people on horse-back and they used swords and spears in their raids. The horsemen also wore thick protective covering [armour] to resist the pointed stick arrows used by the Mada. The Mada people moved into the forests or the surrounding hills because the horses could neither climb the hills nor enter the forests.<sup>68</sup>

In the 1880s, Magaji Dan Yamusa of Keffi led an unsuccessful raid on the forest settlement of Gwanje, which almost cost him his life.<sup>69</sup> It is remembered that the people always had their poisoned arrows prepared in anticipation of any conflict and every morning, twelve people were selected to be lookouts, with each climbing a tall tree at a distance from the other.<sup>70</sup> At the sight of the raiders, the first look out signalled his arrival to the next until the message got to the village where the women and children were immediately taken into hiding. The men dispersed in different directions and when the raiders arrived in the village, they were attacked from behind. In the confusion of the unexpected attack, many of the invading army and their horses were killed.<sup>71</sup> At Rinze,

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Sidi Tide at Gwanje, 15 November 2004.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Lumbo, Tache Naluku and Maiganga Zenya at Gwanje, 14 November 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Interview at Gwanje with Sidi Tide, 20 November 2003; interview at Ungwa Loko with Baba Loko, 14 November, 2003; Interview at Andaha with Malam Yakubu, 10 November 2003.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid* and also interview with Dawa Dandoka at Gbuje, 20 November 2003.

the people also fought the raiders and even captured a sword, which is presently used as the symbol of authority for the appointed District Head of the area.<sup>72</sup> Although the people were terrorised by the slave raiders, some of them were never subdued and in some cases they even inflicted casualties on the invading forces. They retained their independence until the advent of the British.<sup>73</sup> According to one colonial official, “they were never subdued by the Fulani and were only raided to a moderate extent for slaves when, as often as not, they held their own and sometimes even inflicted heavy loss on their would-be captors.”<sup>74</sup>



**Figure 1.3:** The District Head of Rinze with a sword that was captured in the nineteenth century

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<sup>72</sup> Interview at Rinze with Kasimu Nawani, Musa Waziri, Ahmadu Nasara, Amwe Inusa Jatau, Adamu Yakubu and Dauda Rabo, 24 February 2004 and 3 March 2004.

<sup>73</sup> NAK Jos Prof 488, Volume II: The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of Intelligence Report on, 1935.

<sup>74</sup> NAK SNP 10 338p: Assessment Report on the Mada sub-District of the Mada District of Lafia Division, 1913.

At the first sign of the raiders, the Eggon people that had moved to the hills, “retired to their almost inaccessible villages and greeted any further advance with a shower of poisoned arrows and spears.”<sup>75</sup> Although the slave raiders never subdued the region as a whole, some individuals were captured and enslaved. In some of the villages where I conducted interviews, there were memories of people being captured by the “Hausa people on horses” and taken into slavery. As already mentioned, not all the Eggon people moved up to the hills, as villages like Ubbe, Alushi, Ginda and Bakyeno Kasa were located in the lowland. They survived the depredations of raids from the sub-emirates by paying tributes. The payment of tribute was not only peculiar to these Eggon villages, as other communities in Akwanga had similar sorts of arrangements with the sub-emirates. The payment of tributes to their powerful neighbours was way of coping with the military threat. There was therefore a form of peaceful arrangement between the sub-emirates and some communities in the area. Usman Dan Fodio wrote a general instruction regarding the relationship between non-Muslim communities that had entered into formal treaty with the Sokoto Caliphate: “to make war upon the heathen to whom peace has been granted is unlawful by assent; wrongfully to devour their property is unlawful by assent, and to enslave them is unlawful by assent.”<sup>76</sup>

However, the rulers of the sub-emirates often ignored these instructions. For example, there was an arrangement between the Nunku clan and the sub-emirate of Keffi and later Jama’a. In the 1880s, the village of Nunku seems to have acknowledged some sort of allegiance to Keffi and paid a small annual tribute as a form of insurance or

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<sup>75</sup> NAK SNP 9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922.

<sup>76</sup> D.H. Bivar, “Manifesto of the Fulani jihad” *Journal of African History* (1961), pp.235-243.

immunity against slave raids.<sup>77</sup> The Nunku people, despite meeting their obligations, were sometimes raided by Keffi. They soon became annoyed and changed their allegiance to Jama'a.<sup>78</sup> Jama'a and Nunku clan had had earlier trading relations and this new relationship was utilised by the former as a base and source of intelligence for raids in the southern parts of the area.<sup>79</sup> One informant however, argued that the Nunku people had never paid any tributes to Keffi but only to Jama'a which was militarily stronger.<sup>80</sup> He maintained that the beginning of the friendly relationship between Keffi and Nunku began when the Magaji Dan Yamusa wanted to raid the village and he discovered that the people were Muslims. Since the Koran forbids Muslims from attacking each other, he extended his hand of friendship and promised not to attack the village.<sup>81</sup> However, the Nunku people were not recognized as equal in their relationship with Keffi and as politely observed by an informant from Keffi, "*kome kyaun tafarnuwa, ba ta yi kamar albasa ba*" ("however fine the garlic may be, it is never like the onion").<sup>82</sup>

The slave raiders from the sub-emirates also raided the western parts of Akwanga, present-day Wamba and Mama. The second emir of Lafia, Musa Dan Jaji (1809-1814), attacked the Mama area and raided as far as the Bauchi outpost at the foot of the Plateau.<sup>83</sup> The raid on the Mama, however, did not succeed beyond Jimiya

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<sup>77</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061: Mada District – administration of, 1926.

<sup>78</sup> There is a possibility that the raids carried out by Keffi on Nunku were sometimes to enforce the payments of tributes.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with at Kanbar with Maiganga Zenya, 14 November 2003; Interview with Bala Maishai at Gwanje Bishu, 14 November 2003.

<sup>80</sup> Interview at Andaha with Malam Yakubu Alhaji Yusuf, 10 November 2003.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Interview in Keffi with Alhaji Usman Bako, 16 April 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa*, p.11

village.<sup>84</sup> According to reports from the 1920s, the emir of Lafia also regarded the Eggon villages as, “a slave raiding preserve more than anything else.”<sup>85</sup> There is no concrete evidence to suggest that the entire Eggon people were subjects of the Lafia emirate.<sup>86</sup> Although some of the border villages paid a small amount of tax to the emir, his claim over the Eggon people as a whole was not strong. Arden-Clarke observed that the emir of Lafia’s claim

was not a strong one as only the villages lying to the East, Bakenu Kasa, Ume, Alizaga, Galle and small part of Alogani ever paid any tax. This tax was extremely small consisting of two or three goats and a little palm oil or guinea corn from each village. Other villages in the interior never paid any tax whatever.<sup>87</sup>

The impact of slave raiding on the non-centralised communities has generally been given prominence by historians.<sup>88</sup> In Akwanga, although slave raiding by the sub-emirates did not give rise to a situation in which the “pagan” groups raided each other for slaves on a large and organised scale, some groups collaborated with the invaders against their neighbours. As already mentioned, the warriors from Jama’a eventually came to rely on Nunku village as a base for their raids and the villagers participated in

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<sup>84</sup> Interview at Jimiya with Audu Ali, 6 May 2004; Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.32.

<sup>85</sup> NAK SNP9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922.

<sup>86</sup> From the various interviews conducted at Wakama and Kagbu, there was a general consensus that the local people were not at any stage subjected to the sub-emirates.

<sup>87</sup> NAK SNP9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922.

<sup>88</sup> M.A. Klein, “The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies” *Journal of African History*, 42 (2001), pp.49-65; Hubbell, “View of the Slave Trade from the Margin” in the same volume, pp.25-47.

such events, which they regarded as “natural, practical and shrewd.”<sup>89</sup> Therefore, some of the successes of the raiders in capturing slaves were direct result of cooperation they enjoyed. As already mentioned, some of the Eggon villages that were on the lowlands survived by developing their defences and the periodic payments of tributes to the sub-emirates. The payments were made in kind and slaves and their victims were not captives in organised raids but sometimes strangers that ventured into the area.<sup>90</sup> These occasional kidnappings were carried out in order to meet the tribute requirements of the sub-emirates. However, the continued raids by the sub-emirates and the resistance by the peoples of Akwanga resulted in the considerable loss of lives on both sides. The complex nature of the relationship between the peoples of Akwanga and their powerful neighbours negates the view that they were passive victims of the predation of their powerful militarised neighbours. Rather, slave raiding followed more complex local patterns.

There was a transfer of population from the raided to the raiders and some were sold at the local slave market at Keffi while others were absorbed within the plantation economy of some of the emirates. From the accounts of Maimaina, who was sent as a spy by the British from Lokoja to Kano in 1901, “it was at Keffi that I first saw slaves for sale in a market - men, women, and children too - all seated with their legs stretched out.”<sup>91</sup> Goods were exchanged at the Keffi market for slaves while some were sold to the plantation owners in either Zaria or Nupe.<sup>92</sup> The slave raiders from Keffi also exchanged

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<sup>89</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061/1942, Mada District – administration of.

<sup>90</sup> Interview at Ginda with Musa Bako, 21 May 2004.

<sup>91</sup> A.H.M. Kirk-Greene and P. Newman, *West African Travels and Adventures: Two Autobiographical Narratives from Northern Nigeria* (London, 1971), p.142.

<sup>92</sup> Interview at Gudi with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu, 15 March 2004.



their captives for salt that was locally produced at Keana.<sup>93</sup> In addition, the emirate aristocrats and merchant class had slaves that worked on their plantations and for their businesses. Paul Lovejoy argued that the growth of plantations in northern Nigeria occurred in two stages.<sup>94</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century, growth of plantations arose near the cities of Kano, Katsina, Gwandu and Zaria, all established commercial centres, and near the new capital of Sokoto. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the development of plantations spread to Yola, Nupe and Ilorin. In Zaria, M.G. Smith identified 51 *rinji* (plantations) of various sizes owned by local aristocrats.<sup>95</sup> The sources of the slaves were from raids and tributes.

The slave raids by the sub-emirates against the peoples of Akwanga in the nineteenth century had demographic consequences. Although there is no available demographic data on the peoples of central Nigeria before the twentieth century, there is no evidence that the region was densely populated. The sparse nature of the population of the area was until recently attributed to the effects of the slave raids by Sokoto and its emirates. According to Gourou,

In the dry season...the [Fulani] horsemen ravaged the plains of central Nigeria, massacring or carrying off the inhabitants as slaves...the Benue plains were more fiercely devastated; the Jukun kingdom was not even converted into a vassal stage, but

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> P.E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Second Edition: Cambridge, 2000), p.203.

<sup>95</sup> Smith, *Zazzau*, 81.

was ruthlessly destroyed; its inhabitants were dispersed and the area became a dry-season grazing ground for Fulani herds.<sup>96</sup>

Michael Mason however, argued that central Nigeria had low population not as a result of the nineteenth century wars, but because of other factors, such as diseases and climatic conditions, which exerted their influence in the preceding centuries.<sup>97</sup> In further response to Mason, Gleave and Prothero suggested that central Nigeria had low population densities only by comparison with high densities in areas to the north and south of it. They however concluded that slave raiding had modified the distribution of population in the area.<sup>98</sup>

There are biological, medical and environmental factors that could be advanced as the possible reasons for the low population density in central Nigeria. Central Nigeria was an area of low fertility and high mortality rates. According to John Iliffe, the region had low fertility rates compared to the other regions of Nigeria and that population growth before 1950 was a result of the reduction in mortality, rather than an increase in birth rates.<sup>99</sup> This was made possible by the improvement in medical science and the bringing diseases like smallpox and sleeping sickness under control. The discovery of antibiotic drugs was able to overcome, for instance, gonorrhea, one of the major causes of infertility in Africa.<sup>100</sup> From the early missionary records, it was clear that the Eggon

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<sup>96</sup> P. Gourou, *A Tropical World: Its Social and Economic Conditions and its Future Status* (London, 1966), p.114.

<sup>97</sup> M. Mason, "Population Density and 'Slave-Raiding' - The case of the Middle Belt of Nigeria," *Journal of Africa History*, 4 (1969), p.563.

<sup>98</sup> M.B. Gleave and R.M. Prothero, "Population Density and 'Slave-Raiding' - A Comment," *Journal of African History* 2 (1971), pp.319-27.

<sup>99</sup> J. Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (Cambridge, 1993), p.239.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p.241.

people had high infant mortality and high mortality of women in labour especially during the hungry season. Mortality was made worse by periodic droughts.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, the effects of slave raids did not only involve the forceful removal of population, but also disruption and devastation, which created food shortages that led to famine. From the interviews conducted, my informants are of the agreement that the slave raids affected agricultural production, resulting sometimes in disease and famine. Slave raids alone could not be a possible explanation to the low population of the area as only limited areas were raided intensively while most communities effectively defended themselves.

Generally, towards the end of the nineteenth century, slaves formed a high proportion of the population in the Sokoto Caliphate. In his description of Kano in the nineteenth century, Barth observed that the numbers of slaves and free people were about equal.<sup>102</sup> In 1860 when the emir of Zazzau, Mamman Sani died, he left nine thousand slaves to be divided up with his estate.<sup>103</sup> In Yola, Barth also observed that the emir had “all his slaves settled in rumde or slave villages, where they cultivate grain for his profit.”<sup>104</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, the Sokoto Caliphate had in excess over a million slaves; more than anywhere in Africa or the Americas.<sup>105</sup> Slavery became a crucial point of debate in the British conquest of the Caliphate, which was legitimated as an anti-slavery measure. The British public was led to believe that colonial rule would end the scourge and horrors of slavery and slave raids and the suffering of “thousands of

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<sup>101</sup> Alexander: Personal communication, 2 March, 2004.

<sup>102</sup> H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa 1849 – 1855* (London, 1962), Volume II pp.124-5; pp.143-4.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *Zazzau*, p.158.

<sup>104</sup> Barth, *Travels and Discoveries*, II, p.191.

<sup>105</sup> P.E. Lovejoy and J.S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria 1897-1936* (Cambridge, 1993), p.1.

hapless victims brutally torn from their homes and marched off to lifetime bondage.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore, in order to gain the support of the sceptical British public and the Colonial Office in London, colonial officials in northern Nigeria sometimes exaggerated the extent of the tyrannical rule of the Fulani and their slave raids against the non-Fulani. In his annual report on Nasarawa province for 1902, Lugard noted:

In the Nassarawa country, a once fertile and populous province, one can only view the remains and ruins of large and totally deserted towns, bearing witness to the desolation wrought by one hundred years of internecine strife and slave raiding by the Fulani.<sup>107</sup>

British occupation did not automatically end slave raiding, however, as the defeat of the emirs had thrown the emirates into confusion, resulting in individually organised raids. Lugard, in his annual report of 1900-1901 anticipated that slavery and slave raids would cease in Nasarawa province once a small military garrison was established in Nasarawa town.<sup>108</sup> However, in 1903, Constance Larymore, wife of a colonial official, saw a caravan of slaves on her way to Keffi, writing: “it was the first sign of obvious slavery I had ever seen.”<sup>109</sup> In 1903, Lugard claimed that he had ended all large-scale slave-raiding in northern Nigeria. But some of the emirates continued to send tributes in slaves to Sokoto. For example, despite the establishment of a British garrison at Sokoto,

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<sup>106</sup> S. Mier and M.A. Klein (eds), *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London, 1999), p.1.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted by Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, p.5.

<sup>108</sup> *Northern Nigeria Annual Report*: Report for period from 1 January 1900, to 31 March 1901, p. 10.

<sup>109</sup> C. Larymore, *The Resident's Wife in Nigeria* (London, 1908), p.47.

Zaria still managed to send its annual tribute of one hundred slaves to the town.<sup>110</sup> This had implications for the peoples of Akwanga region, as the British presence did not automatically end slave raiding by the sub-emirates.

## **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION IN PRE-COLONIAL AKWANGA**

The pre-colonial political organisation of the peoples of Akwanga was decentralised. In other words, there was no single political unit around which all power was centred amongst them. The general basis of government was customs and traditions handed down for generations, which were subject to the authority of the ancestors. The interpreters of such customs were the elders and government was basically gerontocratic. The elders were mostly members of the families or clans that were represented in community councils. Hence, any understanding of the nature of the political organisation of the people in the region must take into account the social organisation of the family and clan.

The family was the basic unit of production and reproduction, who lived together and traced descent from a remote common ancestor. Amongst the Eggon, for example, the hill settlement was divided into clusters of compounds, strung out along the crest of the hills. Such settlements were composed of extended family groups, each headed by a patriarch or *andakpo*. In turn, members of each extended family resided in scattered households consisting of five to a dozen huts connected by walls around a small courtyard. The general population of the hill settlement was estimated in the early phase of British rule as nearly 36,000, dispersed fairly uniformly with slightly higher

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<sup>110</sup> Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Death of Slavery*, p.23.

aggregations near the more open and level upland areas.<sup>111</sup> The family consisted of the father, who was the head of the household and his wife or wives and children. Each member of the household had certain obligations to perform on behalf of the whole family. The economic, social and religious needs of the family were the responsibility of the head of the household. The head of the household dominated the affairs of the family. It should be noted, however, that the dominance of the head did not necessarily mean that he was the only contributor to the economic status of the family. Although the head of the household directed production, the labour of both the wives and young children was important.

The clan was a federation of groups of close blood relatives tracing their descent from a common ancestor. The role of the clan was important in village administration. Each family was represented by its head at the village council and gradually, the authority which was represented by the head of the household was transferred to the clan or village council. Therefore, the council exercised certain powers on behalf of families or clans. It should be noted that the council performed more religious than political functions. One colonial official in 1913 described the social organisation of the Eggon villages in the following words:

The community is organized in the usual way. There is no one big headman. There are what I call towns, which consist of a varying number of *ungwas* [streets]...Each *ungwa* has its own headman...He is not I think in a position to give

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<sup>111</sup> NAK SNP 617/1922: Reassessment Report, Central Mada District, 1921; NAL SNP 618/1922: Reassessment Report, South Mada District, 1922.

orders, but he is *primus inter pares*, and of course his influence will depend greatly upon his personality.<sup>112</sup>

Amongst the Eggon, the clan was made up of the *Igu* (patrilineal lineage group). At the head of each clan was the *and'ashim* or head of the *ashim* cult, which was basically a form of ancestor worship. Entry into the cult was strictly based on age but some clans also considered mature heads of households with good judgement.<sup>113</sup> The *and'ashim* was responsible for both the temporal and spiritual needs of his clan. The authority of the *and'ashim* was centred on religion, as he was the custodian of the cult. The emblem of the cult was the buffalo horn known as an *Ekú*. The *and'ashim* in council with the *Mo'dako ashim* (elders) were responsible for the running of the clans. However, this does not suggest that the council arbitrarily exercised authority, as all meetings were held in public and all adult males had the right of attendance and the right of speech. Therefore, the voice of authority reflected public opinion. The *and'ashim* however, was the acknowledged religious head of the clan. He was responsible for the maintenance of law and order and also the settling of disputes. The decision to go to war rested on the *and'ashim*, in concert with the elders. War was declared by the blowing of the *eku* (buffalo horn) after a quick mobilisation of able-bodied men able to fight.<sup>114</sup> Weapons used in fighting wars by the Eggon were bows and arrows, swords and stabbing knives.

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<sup>112</sup> NAK, SNP 10/572p: Nasarawa Province, Keffi-Mada District, Assessment Report, 1913.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Arughen Oge Angbaku Karami, Enje Ughe, Tsaku Musa, Abliku Gabi and Kuje Kigbu at Angbaku, 1 and 6 March 2004.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

The Eggon used pointed wooden arrows, smeared in poison, which were effective when fired at a close range.<sup>115</sup>

Similarly, the Mada village administration was in the hands of the elders of the *cinci* (clans). The *lunku* (elders) of each of the clans was represented in the village council of elders or the *banlunku* council. Admission to this council was purely by age and it performed a more religious rather than political function.<sup>116</sup>

Generally, administration was vested in the hands of the elders at the clan council that formed executive authority. However, there were some fundamental changes that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, as a consequence of the establishment of the sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a. After the establishment of these sub-emirates, what were hitherto secure communities became subject to attacks and this strengthened the need for groups to have a leader who could control their defence and other activities.<sup>117</sup> There was also the need for a leader who would take tributes to the sub-emirates on behalf of those communities that had entered into mutual arrangements. These, among other reasons, meant that local people began to concentrate decisions on a single person as opposed to the group of elders.<sup>118</sup> However, despite this transformation in the nineteenth century, local societies did not develop bureaucratic or chiefly offices like their Hausa-Fulani neighbours. According Kasimu Kigbu, with regard to the Eggon:

In the colonial records we have the impression that the region was

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Interview with at Kanbar with Maiganga Zenya, 14 November 2003; Interview with Bala Maishai at Gwanje Bishu 14 November 2003.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Interview with at Kanbar with Maiganga Zenya, 14 November 2003.



treated as if there were no chiefs or as segmentary or stateless societies... but in point of fact there was the institution and the chief was called *Adan Ubin* and was assisted by a council *Moa Andakpo Ashim*...It is enough to point out that these societies were not 'stateless' or 'segmentary.'<sup>119</sup>

It is true that some of the colonial records had misconceptions about local society. However, it is baseless to argue that the local people had chiefly offices like the *sarauta* system of the Hausa-Fulani. David Dorward argued more convincingly that the Eggon was a "chiefless" society based on a number of complementary institutions. The power of the elders rested on "the combination of kinship loyalties, personality and ritual knowledge as well as narrowly defined powers as patriarch of an extended family unit."<sup>120</sup> The institution of *Ari* (chief) was a post-jihad development, influenced by the Hausa-Fulani. The office of *Ari* was generally alien to the Eggon people and in the villages of Angbashu and Ginda, the *Ari* were installed with traditional ceremonies and were presented with the royal hat, gown, sandals and a staff of office in the form of a brush made of the fronds of the palm tree.<sup>121</sup>

At the Mada village of Nunku by the 1880s, Moinda, who served as the first intermediary between Nunku and the emir of Keffi, was intentionally styled the first *Sarki* by the emir although he was not the head of the village.<sup>122</sup> As already noted,

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<sup>119</sup> K. Kigbu et al, *Eggon of Central Nigeria*, pp.7-8.

<sup>120</sup> Dorward, "Nigerian Hill-Farming Society," p.205.

<sup>121</sup> NAK Jos Prof 488, Volume II, The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of intelligence Report on, 1935.

<sup>122</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061: Mada District – administration of, 1942.

Nunku changed its allegiance to Jama'a after they were raided by Keffi and in order to avoid any further relations with Keffi, the emir of Jama'a arbitrarily appointed Zumbi as the village head of Nunku after the death of Moinda. The appointment of Zumbi, who had no established authority in his clan, was not unconnected to the need for Jama'a to have a contact for their slave raids in the area. With the advent of the British, Zumbi was put in charge of the North Mada District, but before that he had no authority whatsoever over the Mada people as a whole.<sup>123</sup> Commenting on the appointment of the Mada chief, the Resident of Plateau province noted in 1927:

This cannot be said to be an hereditary appointment. There was no paramount chief of North Mada prior to the British administration. The title is an artificial creation of our own...it is not the policy of the government to create a strong administration among pagan tribes where such did not exist before our advent.<sup>124</sup>

## **THE RELIGIOUS WORLD-VIEW OF THE PEOPLES OF AKWANGA**

A people's world view is usually defined as "the complex of beliefs, and attitudes which they have concerning the origin, nature, structures, organisation and interaction of being in the universe with particular reference to man."<sup>125</sup> This seeks to answer key questions about the place of man in the universe and does not consist only of the multiplicity of supernatural beings, concepts, beliefs and attitudes, but is also the

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> NAK Jos Prof 433: North Mada District-Appointment of District Head, 1927.

<sup>125</sup> E. Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion* (Onitsha, 1987), p.61.

underlying logic which holds the society together.<sup>126</sup> In the world-view of the peoples of Akwanga, there was a close connection between the material and spiritual world and the aim of the interaction of human beings and the supernatural was intended to preserve balance and harmony in society. Their worldview was man-centred, so man attempts to manipulate nature and the supernatural in such a way that he ensures his continual survival. Therefore, indigenous religion provided a coherent belief system which explained the great life crises of illness and death, and which gave man the feeling that he was in charge and could manipulate his environment, both natural and supernatural, to his advantage.

Although the term “traditional” is used in this discussion to describe indigenous religions or belief systems, it should be noted that the concept of “traditional religion” is a cultural construction.<sup>127</sup> Shaw located its origin in the use of Judaeo-Christian terminology and theology by missionaries when they “translated” elements of the belief systems of the people they were trying to convert.<sup>128</sup> Parrinder was the first to use the concept of African traditional religion in his book, which was later adopted by leading African theologians like John Mbiti.<sup>129</sup> African theologians used it in the period of cultural and religious decolonisation and Africanisation, which made “African Traditional Religion” into the dominant paradigm in the study of the indigenous religions. According to Westerlund:

African Traditional Religion was constructed as the single, pan-

African belief system comparable to Christianity, a

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> R. Shaw, “The Invention of African Traditional Religion,” *Religion* 20 (1990), pp.339-353.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> E.G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London, 1954).

megahomology in comparison to the much more limited delineation of equivalence in missionary cultural translations.<sup>130</sup>

Although the peoples of Akwanga believed in a supreme being, the direct relationship with God was rarely explicit and he did not intervene in the day-to-day affairs of life. These were governed by other invisible forces (good or evil) from whom it was possible to win favours through rituals and spirits of the ancestors. The Mada believed in a supreme being called *Mkparu* or *Ri*, literally translated as sky and sun respectively. *Mkparu* was believed to have created the universe and directs its affairs through *bri* or spirits. These spirits reside in trees, streams, forests and land and sacrifices were offered to them regularly in order to keep supplying man with those natural necessities under their control. The *bri* could either be good or bad and the latter included the souls of people that met violent deaths or died prematurely and witches and wizards who disguised themselves as animals at night to harm others. The good spirits were those of the ancestors, which reside beneath the earth. The spirit of the ancestors:

Act as intermediaries between the living and the supernatural world. They intercede in times of crisis on behalf of their descendants, they assist and guide them and protect them from hunger and mischievous schemes of enemies and they undermined natural disasters. They see that crops of their

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<sup>130</sup> Quoted by Shaw, "Traditional Religion," p.345.

descendants grow and that their animals increase in number and that their descendants have more children.<sup>131</sup>

The spirits of the ancestors were believed to shuttle between the spiritual world and the mundane world. While in the world of the living, they reside either in the village grove, forests or caves. Sacrifices were offered to them at the beginning of planting season, harvests or during other festivals and initiation rites, to express communal appreciation for their support, protection and guidance.<sup>132</sup> It was also the recognition of the vital link between the two worlds that necessitates the *glu-kyu* (funeral dance), which was a rite of passage from the land of the living to that of the ancestors. During the funeral festival, the spirit of ancestors comes to commune with the people through the *njwi* [masquerade]. The highest religious body serving as the link between the spirit of the ancestors and the living was the *nri* society, restricted to grown men. The initiation rites were performed every year, during which all male children who reached the age of puberty were presented before the cult by their fathers or guardians and taken to the sacred grove for initiation. Implicit in the worship of the cult was its significance for the fertility of the land.

The Eggon also believed in the existence of one God called *Ahogbren*, who was approached in rituals through sacrifices. Formal religious ceremonies were channelled through the *ashim* cult, which is headed by its leader *and' ashim*.<sup>133</sup> The *ashim* cult was a form of ancestral worship and the tendency therefore was every household to also have

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<sup>131</sup> C.T. Saleh, "Cosmology of the Mada People" in S.I.O. Okita (ed), *Studies in Nigerian Culture* (Zaria, 1982), p.23.

<sup>132</sup> Interview at Akwanga with Chube, 26 May 2004.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 14 April 2004.

its own *ashim* to whom he prays. The head of the household becomes the *and'* *ashim* of his own family and prayers were offered at the backyard of the house called *anva ashim*.<sup>134</sup> Membership to the *ashim* cult was through initiation, age being the sole criterion. Every village had its own *adan ashims* and they were answerable to the *ada ubin* (father of the land) on whose instructions and on whose behalf they were performing any duties.<sup>135</sup> Like their Mada neighbours, the Eggon believed in ancestral spirits who asserted their authority through the elders in the community. The spirits (*Abibli*) of the ancestors were represented in communal activities by the masquerades, which was under the custodianship of the *ashim* cult. Even though the masquerades were performed by masked individuals, they were regarded as the physical manifestation of the ancestral spirits and their presence symbolised the intervention of the metaphysical world into human affairs.<sup>136</sup> The good spirits were those of the ancestors, who were vested with mystical powers and authority. They retained a functional role in the world of the living, specifically in the life of their living descendants. The elders were the representatives of the ancestors and the mediators between them and the descendants.

Indigenous beliefs systems had their first encounter with Islam in the nineteenth century. Islam came into the region through the northern border village of Nunku. According to an informant, Alhaji Yusuf:

Islam came before Christianity when Hausa traders settled among the Mada people. Islam came to Mada land through Nunku during the reign of Moida. The Hausa that visited Nunku

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

were hosted by Moida and some of them began to settle, which resulted in the emergence of a Muslim community in Nunku. As a result, of this, few people were converted to Islam. A few of the people sent their children to the Quranic schools to learn how to read and write in Arabic. Some of them could recite the Koran and justice was carried out through Islamic laws.<sup>137</sup>

It is difficult to say exactly when the Hausa-Fulani began to settle amongst the Mada people in the nineteenth century. Present-day informants maintained that the Sokoto jihad triggered the movement of the Hausa-Fulani to Akwanga, who began to settle in the surrounding areas like Jama'a, Keffi and Lafia.<sup>138</sup> They at first began to trade with the border villages like Nunku and Ugwan Zaria and gradually began to settle amongst the local people. Thus, Hausa-Fulani traders were the pioneer immigrants to settle in the region and were followed by Muslim clerics, who specialised in handing out charms against evil spirits.<sup>139</sup>

Although there is no statistics of the number of Hausa-Fulani immigrants that settled in Akwanga region in the nineteenth century, in the 1921/22 assessment of the Mada district, Arden-Clarke reported that there were three Hausa settlements at Nunku, Andaha and Numwa Babba and one Hausa family in Katanza.<sup>140</sup> In Akwanga town, there was only one Hausa settlement by 1922 with a population of 185.<sup>141</sup> The Hausa

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<sup>137</sup> Interview at Andaha with Alhaji Yusuf, 10 November 2003.

<sup>138</sup> Interview at Rinze with Kasimu Nawani, Musa Waziri, Ahmadu Nasara, Amwe Inusa Jatau, Adamu Yakubu and Dauda Rabo, 24 February 2004 and 3 March 2004.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> NAK SNP 17-K5922: North Mada District, Akwanga Division Reassessment, 1922.

<sup>141</sup> NAK SNP 9/617: Central Mada District, Lafia Division, Nasarawa Province, 1922.

that settled maintained their religious practices and some of the Mada people accepted it because of the advantages they thought they could gain from it.<sup>142</sup> One of the important benefits of Islam was the use of talismans that were given out by the Muslim clerics. These were seen as a protection against evil spirits and also as a panacea to numerous day-to-day problems.<sup>143</sup> Another area of ready agreement between Islam and indigenous beliefs system was the practice in matters of divination and the use of magic. Islamic practice encouraged divination and the use of good magic. Islam approves and sanctions magical procedures, which were directed towards such legitimate ends as the cure of disease, the prevention and curtailment of misfortune, and assurance of prosperity and success. Therefore, the growth of Islam amongst the Nunku clan was because of the ability of the new religion to adapt to local customs and therefore made its assimilation easy. For instance, the Koran mentions many spiritual beings, including angels, *aljanu* (jinn) and *iskoki* (bad spirits), which were easily assimilated into the Mada belief system, and Islam was not strict on its new adherents to abandon their accustomed confidence in all their mystical forces. By the turn of the twentieth century, some of the Mada people from Nunku were literate in Arabic. For example, in 1913, Mr. Sciortino, the Divisional Officer in charge of Jama'a gave the village head of Nunku a detailed list in Arabic of the whole assessment of the Mada district.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, when one seeks to explain the steady growth in the number of Muslims amongst the Mada in the nineteenth century, it seems undeniable that the power credited to the *malamai* and traders played a significant part in it. At the very least, it provided an effective entry to Muslim concepts by giving

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<sup>142</sup> Interview with at Kanbar with Maiganga Zenya, 14 November 2003; Interview with Bala Maishai at Gwanje Bishu 14 November 2003.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> NAK SNP 10/133p: Nasarawa Province, Jama'a Division, Mada Patrol, 1914.



practical answers to some of the people's problems in terms which were culturally acceptable. In the southern and eastern parts of Akwanga, Islam only made a successful penetration in the early twentieth century after the establishment of the British rule in the area.

### **THE PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMY OF THE PEOPLES OF AKWANGA**

Agriculture was the dominant productive activity in pre-colonial Akwanga and the peoples of the area showed a very high degree of mastery of their contrasting environments. Different methods of cultivation were practised, varying from terracing on the hill slopes to shifting cultivation and bush fallowing in the plains. The Mada, Rindre, Arum and most of the groups that settled in the plains had two types of farms, namely, compound and bush farms. The former relates to a piece of land behind the house, intensively cultivated with its fertility maintained by the application of animal manure, compost (leaves plucked for use as sleeping mats and after thrown into the farm), household refuse and ashes. Bush farms, on the other hand, were far away from home and their fertility was maintained by the compost of rotten leaves of shrubs cut down on the farms during the clearing period.<sup>145</sup> These farms were often fallowed as long as there were other portions to cultivate. According to an informant, a piece of land would be farmed for three to five years, and when it showed signs of declining productivity it was rested for two or more years, and when it showed signs through thick

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with Alhaji Gwamna at Akwanga, 22 March 2004; Interview with Dawa Dandoka at Gbuje, 6 December 2003.

grass cover that it had regained some of its fertility would be brought back into cultivation.<sup>146</sup>

Agricultural production was based on an intimate knowledge of the local rain and soil conditions as well as on a wide familiarity with the local trees, grasses and other plants. Knowledge of the fauna and flora was handed down from generation to generation and possession of such knowledge, especially by the elders, was important for seasonal agricultural cycles. Elders, on the basis of their experience and age, gave advice on the best time for tilling, planting and harvesting and also deciding on when the workforce of the family should move to another locality for the purpose of shifting cultivation, bush fallowing and the system of crop rotation.<sup>147</sup> The process of production in the agricultural sector was carried out in four different stages. Firstly, the clearing of the bush and the burning of rubbish was the preliminary stage in the production process, which was carried out by both men and women. Then followed tilling and ridge making for most of the crops which was performed mostly by men. The second stage was the sowing or planting process, which differed according to the kind of crop. While the seeds of guinea corn, groundnut and maize were sown on the top of the ridges, beniseed was sown by spreading or scattering the seeds on both the ridges and furrows.<sup>148</sup> Sweet potatoes and cocoyams were planted on the ridges. For this both male and female labour was employed. The third stage in the process of production was the maintenance of the crops, which involved weeding, pruning and transplanting of crops like guinea corn. Both men and women performed weeding at this stage. The final stage was the harvest,

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<sup>146</sup> Interview with Isuwa Ambi at Endehu, 15 November 2003.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Alhaji Gwamna at Akwanga, 22 March 2004; Dawa Dandoka at Gbuje, 6 December 2003.

which depended largely on the types of crops. For guinea corn, it involved cutting down the stalk, removing the heads and then tying them into bundles. This was done by men and the women carried the bundles from the fields to their homes where these were stored by the men in the granaries, out of which the head of the household gave out portions of the crops to the family when the need arose.<sup>149</sup>

As already mentioned, the depredations by slave raiders from the sub-emirates intensified the movement of some of the Eggon people to the defensible hilltops. While acknowledging the defensive aspect, this factor should not be regarded as the sole explanation for the hill settlement. The generalised Eggon assertion that the hills were "healthier" as already mentioned needs to be seen against the prevalence of trypanosomiasis and microfilarial diseases on the surrounding plains.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, the sophisticated terraced agriculture, which the Eggon had evolved to meet the demands of the ecosystem of the hills was extremely efficient in terms of land and labour input, a possible explanation for the persistence of hill farming in so many areas in central Nigeria.<sup>151</sup> However, the intensification of the movement of the Eggon people to the hills created a series of problems, especially the limited amount of and poor quality of land for cultivation. The Eggon began extensive hill agriculture and they developed a system of terracing across the hilly slopes, which enabled them to conserve the topsoil and create a series of stepped level benches suitable for farming. The farms proper were at the foot of the hills on the plains and those parts on the hills were described in 1913 as

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> NAK SNP 338p: Assessment Report, South Mada District, 1913.

<sup>151</sup> For a detail discussion of a hill farming community in central Nigeria, see Netting, *Hill Farmers of Nigeria*.

“healthy, [and] every foot of land is cultivated.”<sup>152</sup> Although the people constructed their permanent settlements on the hills, during the rainy season they moved to their temporary settlements on the plains. They usually descended from the hills in large numbers armed with their bows and arrows and their agricultural tools. Lookouts who climbed on tall trees and nearby hills were used and the approach of an enemy was signalled by the sound of trumpets, warning them to retreat to the hills.<sup>153</sup> Raids on the local people made it difficult to practice shifting cultivation on the plain. The people responded creatively by constructing anti-erosion barriers and building terraces on the hills. They also practised crop rotation and used animal and vegetable manure in order to maintain soil fertility, allowing successive food crops to be produced with little or no intervening fallow period. Although my informants could not remember how terraces were constructed, they were similar to those described by Robert Netting of the nearby Kofyar people:

The method was to build up a stone wall leaning slightly in from the vertical toward the hill slope. After the wall had risen a foot or two, earth was hoed down from the slope above to fill in the space behind it. If a higher wall was required, the process could be repeated.<sup>154</sup>

The construction of the stone wall at the heart of the Eggon hills fascinated Mr. Patrick, the Assistant Resident of Keffi division: “I was much struck with the excellence of these

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<sup>152</sup> NAK SNP10/338p: Assessment Report on Mada sub-District of Mada District of Lafia Division, 1913.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Likita Abimiku and Isuwa Ambi at Endehu, 15 November 2003.

<sup>154</sup> Netting, *Hill Farmers of Nigeria*, p.58.

dry stone walls, they are well made as any that one sees in Derbyshire.”<sup>155</sup> Arden-Clarke also admired the Eggon hill agriculture and terracing:

The people are expert agriculturalists. Many farms situated on steep and rocky hill slopes are well and cleverly terraced, showing signs of a great expenditure of time and labour. The Madas [sic] are also clever in building the stone walls surrounding their compounds. These walls are well made and almost equal to those to be seen in Yorkshire or Durham.<sup>156</sup>

Similarly, Mr. Farrant of the Sudan United Mission wrote in 1925 about the Eggon hill agriculture:

The tribes, with incredible labour compelled these slopes to feed them...Since the violent rains wash the good soil off the slopes, the tribes proceeded to build stone walls which trapped the earth, so farming narrow terraces and step upon step up the hill side wherever there is any soil these terraces go. Thousands and thousands of tons of rock and stone have been built into these in the course of years...The very tiniest pockets of soil are not despised...I saw a boulder about the size of a cart. On its top there might be two bucketsful of

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<sup>155</sup> NAK SNP10/572p: Nasarawa Province, Keffi-Mada district, Assessment Report, 1913.

<sup>156</sup> NAK SNP9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922.

earth, but this had been turned over with a hoe and three stalks of maize were growing in it.<sup>157</sup>

The peoples of Akwanga also raised domestic animals like goats, sheep, pigs, chickens and dogs, but did not keep cattle and horses.<sup>158</sup> Most families kept these animals and the numbers varied according to the wealth of a household.<sup>159</sup> The domestic animals were stored wealth and were mostly used for religious ritual, payments for medicinal healing and marriages. Occasionally, such as when a family had a guest, a chicken or a goat was slaughtered.<sup>160</sup> The dung of these animals was used to maintain the fertility of the compound farms. The Eggon, apart from using compost and household refuse relied greatly on animal manure as a source of fertilizer for the intensive hill agriculture. They attached great importance to their livestock, which were only killed or sold in extreme cases.<sup>161</sup> However, there were limits to the number of livestock that the Eggon could efficiently maintain. For example, penned goats had to be fed year round and this involved long treks to the plains during the dry season for fodder. Grazing on the plain was a risky business. In addition, to take the goats to graze was to spread dung and urine on another man's fields or the bush.

Oil palms flourished amongst the Mama and Eggon and were integral part of the agricultural system. In 1915, Mr. Mathews, the Assistant District Officer of Lafia

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<sup>157</sup> F.G. Farrant, "Lezin-Lafiya, Our Most Interesting Town," *The Lightbearer*, xxi (1925), p.97.

<sup>158</sup> NAK SNP K934/1913: Mada Assessment Report, 1912; NAK SNP 831/1923: Reassessment of Mama District, 1922.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Likita Abimiku and Isuwa Ambi at Endehu, 15 November 2003.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

Division observed: “the Mamas and Madas [sic] do take care of their palms.”<sup>162</sup> The Eggon planted palm trees at the edge of the fields, which helped anchor the terraces, shaded the crops, broke the force of wind and rain, and supplied not only oil but more important palm kernels. Palm kernel was one of the major diets of the ‘hungry season,’ the period before the crops were harvested.

Another important economic activity in the area was hunting. This was a part time economic activity that was exclusively male oriented and carried out during the dry season as a supplement to agriculture. Hunting was organised on an individual or communal basis, using both simple and complex tools like sticks, bows and arrows, traps and nets. Individual hunts could be carried out either during the day or night, using dogs. The game usually caught in individual hunts includes hares, squirrels, rats and rabbits. This game was either consumed by the individual or brought back home to be consumed with the family.<sup>163</sup> Communal hunts involved the whole lineage or village and sometimes neighbouring villages. They were usually organised by a person who announced the date and location for the hunt and were launched by starting bush fires in the area designated for the hunt. Communal hunting was both an important economic and social activity amongst the various groups in Akwanga. For example, communal hunting among the Mada people was organised to commemorate the death of an elderly person and the game caught was given to the organiser.<sup>164</sup> People from within and outside the village were invited to participate in the hunt, which was followed by the

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<sup>162</sup> NAK SNP 10/555p: Nasarawa Province, Nungu Independent District, Lafia Division, Assessment Report, 1915; SNP 9/831: Mama District, Lafia Division, Nasarawa Province, Re-assessment Report, 1922.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Maiganga Zenya and Lumbo at Gwanje, 16 December 2003.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

*Glukyu* (death/funeral dance) that lasted five days for a man and four for a woman.<sup>165</sup>

The hunt organiser usually provided food for his guests and this was followed by the consumption of *malamkpa* (local beer). Although women did not participate in communal hunting, they were responsible for the preparation of the snacks eaten in the bush and the food and beer consumed during the festival/ceremony that followed the hunt.

In addition to hunting, there were craftsmen, principally mat-makers, weavers and blacksmith. Crafts supplemented agriculture, rather than serving as an alternative. Such goods and services were exchanged for food, fodder, fertilizer and labour. As already mentioned, there was a considerable exchange amongst the communities of Akwanga with recognised markets and attended by Hausa traders who brought in salt and iron in exchange for foodstuffs, mats and pottery. Blacksmithing was an exclusively male activity. Iron smelting was a long process starting with the collection of iron ore dug out from under the ground. The ore was heated in the furnace using charcoal as fuel. The melted ore was removed from the furnace and taken to the blacksmith who transformed it into hoes, axes, knives and arrows.<sup>166</sup> Most of the smelting was done during the dry season and involved most of the members of the household in one way or the other. Amongst the Eggon, women collected firewood, made it into charcoal and then transported it to the furnace where the smelting took place. The Eggon do not appear to have smelted their own ore but relied upon iron supplies from elsewhere, generally in form of discus-shaped ingots.<sup>167</sup> These ingots served as money in the hills and were used

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*; Interview with Kasimu Nawani, Musa Waziri, Ahmadu Nasara and Amwe Inusa at Rinze, 6 March 2004.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Arugben Oge, Kuje Kigbu and Ablika Gabi at Angbaku, 1 March 2004.

<sup>167</sup> NAK SNP 617/1922: Assessment Report, Central Mada District, 1921.



by local blacksmiths to manufacture hoes and other implements. It appears to have been concentrated in certain settlements in the rugged north eastern hills, possibly because of the proximity to the supply of timber along the Mada River for charcoal-making.

Beer making was carried out by each household or compound in Akwanga. A family's wealth was measured to some extent by the frequency with which it brewed beer, and indeed there were some families who were too poor to brew beer at all, and had to cadge some from their wealthier neighbours.<sup>168</sup> Women of a household generally did brewing and it was mostly made from guinea corn. By giving a beer party, the people converted their stored surplus production, which could be carried forward to the next season, into prestige and on-going social (and possibly) obligations within and beyond their kin group.

## LABOUR MOBILISATION

The organisation of labour in the process of production was based on an individual or a group of individuals working in co-operation. Individual labour used was mostly in part time activities (especially craft production). The use of group labour was dominant in agricultural activity. Amongst the Eggon, the household was the unit of residence, consumption and reproduction, but it was not synonymous with the unit of labour and production. Many labour-intensive tasks, such as planting, harvesting and terrace maintenance, were undertaken by communal labour groups called *burdi*, based on the extended family group and directed by the *andakpo*. Moreover, the *andakpo* not only exercised considerable control over the labour of constituent households within the

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<sup>168</sup> Interview with Dawa Dandoka at Gbuje, 20 November 2003.

extended family unit, but through claims to ritual authority and the redistribution of considerable produce of that labour. Arden-Clarke wrote in 1921:

Members of one [extended] family live in...neighbouring compounds, work on one farm under the direction of the head of the family and pool the produce of their farm gained by their joint labour. Each adult married member of the [extended] family usually has a small plot of ground of his own, the production of which is his own personal property. But the head of his family has first call on his time and labour.<sup>169</sup>

A young man was obliged to labour for his father and father-in-law. In return, a father was responsible for arranging and paying the bride-price for his son's first wife.<sup>170</sup> Only through marriage was a young man transformed into an adult, with the right to erect his own household and granary. Marriage, however, bound a young man into further obligations to elder men at a time when he was about to move out of his father's household to establish his own. This was because the obligations and ritual demands upon younger men were such that wealth and status only came with age and paternity, when men were in a position to exploit the labour of dependents.

There were other sources of labour, including voluntary work. This generally took place on the farms of people that were indisposed or ill. Also, people who needed grain or domestic animals like goats or sheep for marriage payments or rituals, could

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<sup>169</sup> NAK SNP 617/1922: Reassessment Report, Central Mada, 1922.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Arugben Oge, Kuje Kigbu and Ablika Gabi at Angbaku, 1 March 2004. This practice was common amongst the groups in Akwanga.

supply labour to anyone who has surplus of these items.<sup>171</sup> Labour was also provided by either a suitor or son-in-law (using corporate labour group) to parents of his betrothed or wife. This was meant for the suitor to show his ability to provide food for his wife.<sup>172</sup> Division of labour was generally based on age and sex. The men cleared and cultivated the bush farms, hunted, built and thatched the huts and performed rituals. Women planted and cultivated fields and performed all domestic chores. The aged looked after homes and if any household had sheep, they herded these with the young boys whose duty was to cut grass for the animals, while the young girls washed the pots and calabashes and fetched water for domestic use. All these production activities show that while some required only individual labour, some required complex co-operation.

## CONCLUSION

Absence of sources means that the history of the peoples of Akwanga in the nineteenth century and before is difficult to reconstruct. The relationship that developed between the decentralised groups in the region on the one hand and the Hausa-Fulani state builders on the other was complex, characterised by both conflict and cooperation. To see the peoples of Akwanga simply as passive victims of depredation is wrong. During the course of slave raiding, some of the communities in Akwanga defended themselves effectively, while others paid tributes or co-operated with the predators in order to safeguard their existence. By resisting the Hausa-Fulani state builders, the peoples of Akwanga were able to forge their own history and create a distinct identity outside the sub-emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. They maintained their political

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<sup>171</sup> Interview with Dawa Dandoka at Gbuje, 20 November 2003.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

independence and continued to resist alien domination until the British colonial forces subdued them in the second decade of the twentieth century. It is to the process of colonial conquest that we now turn in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **COLONIAL CONTACT, CONQUEST AND RESISTANCE, 1907-1925**

This chapter will examine the process of British penetration into Akwanga, which began in 1907. It begins by looking at the events leading up to the initial British contact and conquest of the area. It will also focus on the nature of the resistance to colonial subjugation of the peoples of the region. Long-standing resistance to the incursion by sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a was subsequently extended to the British, who took the same routes as the slave raiders during their wars of conquest. The peoples of Akwanga perceived the arrival British invaders as representing continuity from earlier Hausa-Fulani predators. Although resistance was ultimately ineffective in the face of the Maxim gun and the power of the colonial state, it was not until the 1920s that the peoples of Akwanga were finally subdued.

### **THE CONQUEST OF THE SOKOTO CALIPHATE AND THE CREATION OF NORTHERN NIGERIA**

Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the Royal Niger Company (hereafter RNC) was the sole agent of British administration in what later became northern Nigeria. The company came into being after British firms decided to present a common front against the commercial rivalry of the French and eliminate

competition between themselves in order to increase their profit. The amalgamated British firms were granted a Royal Charter in July 1886 with the “power to administer, make treaties, levy customs and trade in all territories in the basin of the Niger and its effluents.”<sup>1</sup> The charter however, did not give British firms or the company monopoly over trade in the region, stating that nothing “in this our charter shall be deemed to authorise the company to set up or grant any monopoly of trade.”<sup>2</sup> The RNC was given the responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in its area of influence and thus became involved in both trade and governance. This resulted in the company establishing courts and an armed constabulary in order to maintain law and order. The company also became responsible for the imposition of customs duties on both indigenous and foreign traders conducting business within the company’s jurisdiction. The RNC managed to send an envoy to Sokoto in 1885, but up to the time of the revocation of its charter and the declaration of the Northern Protectorate of Nigeria in 1900, it exercised little effective power away from the Niger and Benue rivers, and had not taken steps to establish any regular system of administration.<sup>3</sup> Quoting Sir James Willcocks, Margery Perham wrote:

Unless the company meant to give up, it was impossible to see how they could have expected to carry on their duties as an administrative as well as a trading concern with the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. Perham (ed), *The Native Economies of Nigeria* (London, 1946), p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by O. Awolowo, *The People's Republic* (Ibadan, 1968), p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British African Territories Part III, West Africa: Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia* (London, 1951), p.47.

very small numbers of soldiers and European officials they employed.<sup>4</sup>

The restrictive nature of the company's operations in the area encouraged the emir of Kontagora to conclude that the British were a species of fish and would die if they left the Niger.<sup>5</sup> The RNC only put up a show when its position was threatened, to demonstrate that the company could represent British imperial interests. The attack by the company on Ilorin and Bida in 1897 clearly shows that it acted when its position was in danger. Attack on slavery in the emirates was ultimately associated with the British advance into northern Nigeria and Article 6 of the company's charter gave powers to suppress any form of slavery within their jurisdiction.<sup>6</sup> This charter created a problem for the RNC as it did not want to antagonise the Caliphate. When the company came under severe criticism, it quickly attacked Bida and Ilorin as an anti-slavery measure. According to Flint:

The motive of the war would be announced as the suppression of slavery and slave-raiding. With victory, the company would no longer be an obscure trading company which Englishmen only heard of by reading rather disturbing reports of allegations in Parliament. It would then not be so easy for Chamberlain to revoke the charter...public opinion would want to know why a

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<sup>4</sup> Perham, *Native Administration*, pp.33-34.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.34.

<sup>6</sup> Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery*, p.14.

company which had recently ventured so much should now be brought up ignominiously.<sup>7</sup>

The military action against Ilorin and Bida was carried out as a public relations boost for the company and the campaign was given tremendous publicity. A correspondent for *Times* was on the spot to report to the British public while other newspapers organised contacts in order to get the news as soon as they happened.<sup>8</sup> With increasing French and German imperial and commercial rivalry in the region, however, the British government became concerned about the ability of the RNC to protect its interests. The company was also ill equipped to satisfy the financial, administrative and military requirements which were needed to challenge the French or the Germans. The major threat came from Mr. Flegel, a German businessman. He persuaded the German government to take more interest in the Niger-Benue area which offered possibilities of communication with the new German colony of Kamerun.<sup>9</sup> He took some Hausa businessmen from Nasarawa province to Germany and in April 1885, he returned with other five German companions to the Niger. The RNC, unable to persuade the Germans to join the company, harassed them at Loko and they were frustrated from establishing any political stake in northern Nigeria. The RNC was later accused of breaching its charter as other firms complained of the company's monopolistic practices. This, among other reasons, resulted in the revocation of the its charter

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<sup>7</sup> J.E. Flint, *Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (London, 1960), 246-247.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> J. Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned: The Loaded Pause 1885-89* (London, 1974), p.98.



with effect from 1 January 1900 and Her Majesty's Government took over control of territories that were formally under the company's jurisdiction.

Following the revocation of the Company's charter in 1899, the British were determined to challenge German and French colonial intentions in the region by getting a firmer grip on the political and administrative affairs of the territory. The appointment of Fredrick Lugard as High Commissioner of northern Nigeria brought the British a great deal closer to the realisation of these goals. On 1 January 1900, Lugard officially conducted the transfer ceremony from the RNC to the British government at Lokoja.<sup>10</sup> As Lugard saw it, the proclamation meant the taking over of lands that the RNC had previously controlled. It should be noted that the RNC had made a number of treaties with emirs and chiefs, although according to Lord Hailey, these treaties did not give the company any definite rights over land.<sup>11</sup> Lugard however, sent an Arabic translation of the proclamation to the Caliph informing him of the change of administration in the region based on the treaties previously signed with the RNC. The implication of the proclamation was that the people of northern Nigeria had to accept British sovereignty, which was interpreted by both the Caliph and the emirs as accepting *mulkin arna* (rule of the infidels). As such, the Muslim communities in northern Nigeria saw it as a declaration of war. According to Adeleye, "its contents alone, particularly the breach of treaties implicit in it, the proclamation could hardly have been better framed to arouse the fear and hostility of its recipients."<sup>12</sup> Lugard knew that his

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<sup>10</sup> Public Record Office, Colonial Office (hereafter PRO CO) 446/9: Lugard to the Colonial Office, "Ceremony of Transfer from Royal Niger Company," 1900.

<sup>11</sup> Hailey, *Native Administration*, p.89.

<sup>12</sup> Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*, p.250.

declaration of northern Nigeria as a British possession only existed on paper and he could not take any military action against the Caliphate and its emirates because of a lack of sufficient troops. Most of the troops were despatched to help in the Ashanti war in the Gold Coast in May 1900 and Lugard had to wait for their return before he could take any action.<sup>13</sup> The return of the troops in December paved the way for the wars of conquest in northern Nigeria that began with the fall of Bida and Kontagora in 1901.<sup>14</sup> The reasons given by Lugard for the subjugation of Bida and Kontogora was that the "two chiefs acting in combination have during this year raided an enormous number of villages for slaves, laying waste the country with fire and sword, so that at present great areas are almost depopulated."<sup>15</sup> However, the occupation of these emirates was part of a general British programme of gradual advance towards Sokoto, just as the occupation of Adamawa, Bauchi and Gombe was a prelude to the British conquest of Borno.

The excuse given by Lugard for the invasion of Kano and Sokoto was also centred on slavery and slave raids. The death in 1902 of Abdurrahan, the Sultan of Sokoto, gave Lugard the opportunity to quickly advance to Sokoto because the central Caliphate was thrown into confusion. Earlier in March 1902, Lugard wrote to Abdurrahman about the British expedition to Bauchi and the deposition of the emirs of Bida and Kontagora to, which the Sultan replied that he did not wish that anyone from among the British should live with him, and that between him and them (the British) there could be nothing but war as commanded by God

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<sup>13</sup> PRO CO 446/10: Lugard to the Colonial Office, June 1900.

<sup>14</sup> PRO CO 446/14: Lugard to Colonial Office, March 1901; PRO CO 446/16: Wallace to Colonial Office, September 1901.

<sup>15</sup> PRO CO 446/14: Lugard to the Colonial Office, "Bida and Kontagora," March 1901.

Almighty.<sup>16</sup> This was interpreted by Lugard as a threat of war and he believed that the conflict was inevitable and any delay would make it more serious. Before the British could advance to Sokoto, it was important that Kano had to be subdued first and a perfect excuse presented itself to Lugard in October 1902 via the killing of Captain Gorge William Moloney, the Resident of Nasarawa province, by Magaji Dan Yamusa of Keffi.<sup>17</sup> Magaji was annoyed about the British intervening in his slave raids on the neighbouring communities, including Akwanga. Punitive action was taken against Keffi, which resulted in the destruction of lives and property, while the Magaji fled to Kano and was given a hero's welcome by Aliyu, the emir. A bounty of £40 was placed on his head and while at Kano, the emir refused to hand over the Magaji to the Lugard despite repeated demands to do so.<sup>18</sup> Lugard quickly used the opportunity to invade Kano while the emir was at Sokoto paying homage to the new Sultan, Attahiru. Lugard sent a proclamation to Kano in Hausa assuring the people that the British had no quarrel with any one, except Magaji Dan Yamusa and those who had welcomed him to Kano. They would not attack anyone except those who chose to fight.<sup>19</sup> All friends of Dan Yamusa were declared enemies of British Government and any one who captured him would receive a reward of £30 in cash or kind.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> H.F. Backwell (ed), *The Occupation of Hausaland 1900-1904: Being a Translation of Arabic Letters Found in the House of the Waziri of Sokoto, Buhari in 1903* (London, 1927), pp.13-14; Perham, *Native Administration*, p.40; Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*, p.343.

<sup>17</sup> Rhodes House Library (hereafter R.H) MSS. Afri. S. 141: Umaisha (Usman), Account of the war of the Magaji of Keffi and Captain Maloney, Resident, Keffi (with typed translation and Notes on the Narrative, by M.H. Varvill); Interview at Andaha with Malam Yakubu Alhaji Yusuf, 10 November 2003; Interview at Gudi with Adamu Salihu, 15 March 2004.

<sup>18</sup> R.H. B.E, S.64: R. Popham-Lobb to mother, October 1902.

<sup>19</sup> PRO CO 446/30: Lugard to the Colonial Office, January 1903; PRO CO 446/31: Lugard to Colonial Office, "Report on Kano-Sokoto expedition," 1903.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 2.1:** The grave of Captain Moloney at Keffi

The military action against Kano by Lugard was criticised by a section of the British media. A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in northern Nigeria wrote: “there is I fear, no doubt whatever that the explanations of the government concerning the destination and objects of the military preparations now going on are more less in the nature of a blind.”<sup>21</sup> The reporter also argued that until the British, “have a man like Sir William Macgregor, who believes in peace, appointed to rule Lagos and Northern Nigeria as a colony...sterility, retrogression, and bloodshed will mark our rule in Northern Nigeria.”<sup>22</sup> However, the fall of Kano in 1903 was followed by another British victory in Sokoto, the heart of the Caliphate. After the subjugation of the Sokoto Caliphate and occupation of Borno, the British then focused their attention on the numerous “pagan” communities of central Nigeria.

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<sup>21</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 24 December 1902, p.5.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

## COLONIAL ENCOUNTER IN AKWANGA

In 1900, after Lugard declared northern Nigeria as a British Protectorate, a Resident, Mr. Burdon was appointed for Nasarawa province and he immediately commenced the exploration of the area. Nasarawa province was at first called Lower Benue province, which consisted of all “the Munshi [Tiv] districts north of the Benue and south of the same westward from Katsina Ala River together with that portion of Zaria country lying south of latitude 10°.”<sup>23</sup> The headquarters of the province was initially established at Akwanaja in order to secure the trade routes being disrupted by the Tiv people.<sup>24</sup> They became notorious for disrupting trade along the river Benue and at had various times threatened to attack the RNC’s station at Abinsi. In 1899, some Tiv killed the crew of a British canoe and also attacked a telegraph construction company near Ibi, which affected the construction of the Akwanaja to Ibi line. A punitive expedition was set out in July 1900 to “subdue the Munchi who had been hindering the passage of caravans to and from Nasarawa and Keffi” and also “as a reprisals for the destruction of the telegraph line.”<sup>25</sup> The expedition only succeeded in causing superficial damage and loss to the Tiv, and did not bring the security situation under control. In 1901, another expedition was carried out against the Tiv living close to the banks of the Benue, who were accused of harassing the Hausa traders and European shipping on the river.<sup>26</sup> This expedition, like the previous one, yielded no result.

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<sup>23</sup> *Northern Nigeria Gazette, Government Notice, No 27* (August, 1900), p.126.

<sup>24</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, p.20.

<sup>25</sup> PRO CO 446/10: Lugard to Colonial Office, ‘Munchi Expedition,’ 1900.

<sup>26</sup> *Annual Reports of Northern Nigeria*, 1901.

In January 1902, after the emir of Nasarawa made a formal submission to the British, the provincial headquarters was moved from Akwanaja to Nasarawa town and the name of the province was changed to Nasarawa.<sup>27</sup> The headquarters of the province was moved to Keffi after the British occupation of the area in July 1902. The occupation of Keffi was followed by a formal submission by the emirs of Lafia and Jama'a in March 1903. After the occupation of the sub-emirates, the British began to set up administrative structures by appointing political officers to manage the affairs of the region. In October 1904, Mr. Stanley, an Assistant Resident, was posted to Jama'a while Mr. Gill was put incharge of Lafia in January 1905.<sup>28</sup> At the early stage of British rule in Nasarawa province, the government was occupied with problems in the emirates and therefore ignored the conquest of the decentralised societies of Akwanga.<sup>29</sup> Before the First World War, British colonial administration in the area between Lafia and the Jos escarpment was slight. However, military expeditions were carried out in order to keep trade routes open. For instance, in 1903, the Resident of Nasarawa, Mr. Granville reported to Lugard that the Eggon people were disturbing the Jama'a caravan trade and thereby hampering the movement of traders in the area.<sup>30</sup> He requested for troops to be sent in order to undertake a campaign against the "hill pagans."<sup>31</sup> This was the first reported contact between the peoples of Akwanga and the British.

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<sup>27</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, p.20. The Tiv people in the Lower and Upper Benue provinces were transferred to the newly created Muri province.

<sup>28</sup> NAK SNP 7/2193: Nasarawa Province, Summary of Events, 1911.

<sup>29</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.37.

<sup>30</sup> NAK SNP 15/53: Nasarawa Province, Report by Mr. Granville, 1903; SNP 15/47: Nasarawa Province, general, 1903.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

The expedition did not achieve the desired goal and Mr. Granville reported to Lugard that the "the hill Mada [sic] are at present impossible to deal with."<sup>32</sup>

A semblance of colonial administrative structures in the emirates of Nasarawa province only began to emerge by 1905. However, the jurisdiction of the emirs of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a was extended to the peoples of Akwanga when Lugard visited Nasarawa province in 1905, even before the region was brought under British rule. The subsequent naming of the districts in Akwanga was associated with the nature of the British penetration into the area; the Mada people were grouped under the North Mada district because the British came to the area from the north (Jama'a) while the Eggon were subdued from the South (Lafia) and were therefore called South Mada.<sup>33</sup> It was from these emirates that the British advanced into Akwanga. The attempt to impose direct administrative control was regarded by local people as an extension of Hausa-Fulani domination, which they had been resisting for almost a century. The British presence at this early stage was almost nonexistent, although there were repeated demands by junior colonial officers to their superiors for troops to be sent for operations against the peoples in the backwaters of Keffi and Jama'a, who, according to Dorward, they considered as "murderous truculent savages, to be brought under British authority by military force."<sup>34</sup> The refusal by their superiors to provide adequate troops for the task - the West African Frontier Force being engaged on more pressing punitive patrols elsewhere - was a constant cause of complaint.<sup>35</sup> It was the speculative mining

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> NAK SNP 17/ 11263: Notes on Akwanga Division by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

<sup>34</sup> Dorward, "Ritual Warfare", p.87.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

boom following the discovery of tin that led to the opening up of Akwanga.<sup>36</sup> The road to the tin mines in Jos via Jama'a was opened in March 1907 and in November the British began the subjugation of the peoples in the fringes of Keffi and Jama'a. The peoples of Akwanga were the last groups in Nasarawa province to be brought under the "control by government and it was not until 1907/1908 that military force subdued the tribesmen of the Mada hills for the first time."<sup>37</sup> From 1907, the British directed their energies to subduing and opening the societies of Akwanga.<sup>38</sup>

British penetration into the area took place from Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a. The Hausa-Fulani allied themselves with the British and were employed as soldiers, using the same routes of access into Akwanga as the slave raiders took in the nineteenth century. After the occupation of the sub-emirates, the Hausa-Fulani realised the advantages to be gained from cooperating with the British and therefore gave the little intelligence they had about the warlike nature of the peoples of Akwanga and their settlements, which became vital in the British penetration of the area.<sup>39</sup> One of the major reasons for the use of Hausa soldiers in the conquest of the area (apart from their earlier contact with the British) was the assumption that they were the best fighting men in West Africa. By the late nineteenth century, their fame had spread across the continent. The word "Hausa" subsequently came to mean soldier in different parts of Nigeria and West Africa

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<sup>36</sup> Freund, *Labour and Capital*, pp.35-45.

<sup>37</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, 279.

<sup>38</sup> Sciortino, *Nasarawa Province*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Interview at Rinze with Kasimu Nawani, Ahmadu Nasara, Amwe Inusa Jatau, and Adamu Yakubu, 3 March 2004.



and they were described as “short, sturdy-looking men, and excellent marchers.”<sup>40</sup>

Although British colonial administration did begin in Akwanga by 1911, a series of patrols was necessary to achieve this, culminating in the police patrol of 1925 which finally succeeded in bringing the area under total control. Most of the patrols were in connection with the collection of taxes and the maintenance and imposition of law and order. The British were mistaken in their belief that all the communities in the region were under the sub-emirates and were used to paying taxes or tributes. Colonial conquest was carried out simultaneously with the imposition of taxes. This was seen as a token of submission by the conquered people and, importantly, the revenue generated was to be used in financing the newly created administrative structures. Before the introduction of British currency in Akwanga in the 1920s, taxes were paid in kind. Most of the items taken in tax included livestock, grain, farm implements and other valuable items, which were sold on the spot to Hausa traders who followed the tax collectors.<sup>41</sup> The payment of taxes with these items became a problem as the local peoples were unwilling to part with their surpluses and this meant that the conquest and the imposition of taxes were resisted.

In 1907, a British military patrol visited some Eggon villages and a tax of £94.0s.6d was imposed on the district.<sup>42</sup> The object of the patrol, according to Mr. Campbell Irons, an Assistant Resident, was to enable him to reassure friendly villagers and at the same time, “open up any country that was disposed to be

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<sup>40</sup> S. Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger* (London, 1898), p.170.

<sup>41</sup> Interview at Gudi with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu, 15 March 2004.

<sup>42</sup> NAK SNP9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922; NAK Jos Prof 488 Volume II: The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of intelligence Report on, 1935.

friendly.”<sup>43</sup> The patrol lasted 32 days and during this time 56 villages were visited.<sup>44</sup> Such British patrol are remembered by present-day informants as excessive killings, looting involving and confiscation of their goats, chickens, food and other valuables.<sup>45</sup> The imposition of taxes after the destruction and looting of their means of livelihood left the people in a desperate situation and resentful of British rule.<sup>46</sup> Despite their defeat, local people continued to frustrate the colonial administration by refusing to pay taxes or by deserting their villages during periods of tax assessment and collection.<sup>47</sup>

The patrol did not limit its mission to the region of the Eggon people, but proceeded to the Nungu and Mama areas. The composition of the patrol was further strengthened by the arrival of Sergeant Watts who joined it at Alogani on 17 December and the patrol marched to Wamba and Mama on the 26 December 1907. The village of Mogu was visited first and sections of the people opposed it by firing several arrows. The patrol responded by killing eight of the villagers.<sup>48</sup> The fiercest resistance to the patrol was met at Kanja, where over 25 people were killed in the fighting.<sup>49</sup> Knowledge of the Kanja killings quickly spread to neighbouring villages and on reaching Okombou and Unju on 6 January 1908, the patrol discovered that the villagers were better prepared to engage them in a fight. In the confrontation that ensued, the two villages were destroyed and ten people were killed. As in the case of the Eggon people, the destruction of lives and

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<sup>43</sup> NAK SNP7/5449: Mada Patrol, Report on, 1908.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Interviews with Likita Abimiku, Isuwa Ambi and Yakubu Abimiku at Endehu, 15 November 2003.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> NAK 7/4641: Mada Patrol, 1908.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

properties as a direct result of the military expedition only created more hatred for the British. They started on a wrong footing by enforcing their authority with the use of force, "instead of conference, they used conflict."<sup>50</sup> As observed by Morel, the consequence of any punitive expedition, no matter what the motives were "is ninety times out of every hundred, reactionary, sterile, and morally destructive."<sup>51</sup> Although Morel and other liberals argued that British control of northern Nigeria could have been achieved through diplomacy rather than by the use of force, Lugard wanted to free the government from treaties with the local peoples.<sup>52</sup>

Another military patrol was set out to subdue the northern and eastern parts of the Akwanga in 1909. Leaving Keffi on 1 December, it comprised Dr. Costello and Sergeant Channel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Northern Nigeria Regiment, with 93 troops, one Maxim gun and 144 transport carriers. Lt. Evart joined them at Jama'a on 5 December.<sup>53</sup> The patrol began its operation in Jama'a division and arrived at Yashi in Mama district on 10 January 1910. All the villages visited in Wamba and Mama districts resisted the patrol and on 2 February 1910, when they reached Gwanje, they discovered that the first part of the village was deserted. Gwanje people had concealed themselves in high trees, which gave them good cover.<sup>54</sup> Their previous experience of victory over the sub-emirate of Keffi had given them the courage to resist the British patrol.<sup>55</sup> They made the unfortunate mistake, however, of confusing the Maxim gun with local guns used by the slave raiders.<sup>56</sup> Despite the

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Philip Mai'angwa at Wamba, 18 May 2003.

<sup>51</sup> E.D. Morel, *Affairs of West Africa* (London, 1902), p.106.

<sup>52</sup> Perham, *Native Administration*, 43.

<sup>53</sup> SNP7/2931/1910: Patrols to Attakka, Kagoro, Ninzam and Mada; Report on.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Lumbo, Sidi Tide at Gwanje, 17 November 2003.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

disparity in weapons technology, the local people had the advantage of fighting on their home ground and during their encounter with the British, “managed to make themselves exceedingly troublesome.”<sup>57</sup> During the battle that ensued, two soldiers were killed and three wounded, while five Gwanje people were killed (although my informants insisted that only three people were killed) and the village was burnt down.<sup>58</sup> When they realised the superiority of British weaponry, they admitted that it was not possible to engage in fighting and tried to run away.<sup>59</sup> Despite these early military operations, the British were unable effectively establish law and order in the region. The major cause of ongoing trouble between the British and the peoples of Akwanga was taxation, which was partly due to the manner in which it was collected.<sup>60</sup>

Resistance to the British presence in Akwanga region resulted in the most brutal killings and destruction of lives and properties in Nasarawa province between 1912 and 1917. During 1912, there were two patrols carried out in the division, the first to Gohon Kurmi in the North Mada district.<sup>61</sup> The circumstances that led to the patrol started in the neighbourhood of Gohon Kurmi in January 1912, when it was reported to a political officer that the people of the village had murdered a man from Ancha in an ambush after drinking beer.<sup>62</sup> The circumstances that led to the murder were not clear, but it was reported that an Ancha man had been invited to help some of the villagers harvest their crops,

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<sup>57</sup> SNP7/2931: Patrols to Attakka, Kagoro, Ninzam and Mada; Report on, 1910.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*; Interview with Sidi Tide and Tache Naluku at Gwanje Sarki, 1 December 2003.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> This is further discussed in chapter five.

<sup>61</sup> NAK SNP7/7359/1912: Nasarawa Province Annual Report 1912 by H.D. Larrymore.

<sup>62</sup> NAK SNP7/50/1912: Nasarawa Province, Bohon [sic] Kurmi Patrol.

which was a normal practice between the two villages.<sup>63</sup> It seems that there was a misunderstanding during the “refreshment” after the harvest and the people decided to resolve it outside the village under the influence of alcohol, which led to the fatality. The village head of Gohon Kurmi was immediately ordered to surrender those involved in the murder, but this instruction was ignored. In an attempt to effect the arrest of the culprits, Lt. Knapp and one of the escorts, Bako Lafia were wounded.<sup>64</sup> Gohon Kurmi was burned down and one villager was killed while three were wounded. The refusal to hand over the culprits provoked the wrath of the British. In July 1912, six months after the incident, the Secretary of the Northern Provinces sanctioned a patrol to Gohon Kurmi. The patrol encompassed a company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Northern Nigeria Regiment under Captain Green. On reaching the village, the patrol discovered that it was deserted. Parties were sent to search for the villagers in the surrounding forest and in the process the patrol came under attack and the escorts opened fire and killed about ten people and drove the rest out of the forest. The village was razed to the ground and the villagers crops rooted out.<sup>65</sup> Police operations at Gohon Kurmi lasted until 4 October and the villagers were left without food and shelter. The inhuman way the operation was carried out is still remembered today. Reaction to any question about the colonial period was the British destruction of their village and the killings that accompanied it. They maintained that there was no justification for such killings and for the looting and destruction of the whole village.<sup>66</sup> Villagers

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Musa et al, group interview at Goho, 6 June 2003.

returned from hiding and discovered that they had lost everything. Worse still, the uprooting of the crops resulted in some villagers' deaths because of lack of food.<sup>67</sup> The conduct of the colonial troops was appalling and in his report to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces, the Resident of Nasarawa wrote: "so much hardship to innocent people has I believe, been caused by this prompt intervention by troops, that I would personally vote against it every time."<sup>68</sup> The second patrol in 1912 was to avenge the death of a mining engineer, Mr. Campbell, who was killed near Gako in Wulko. One of the reasons given by colonial officials for Campbell's murder was local suspicion that the white-flagged beacons placed near farms by mining prospectors. The local people believed that the white flags would delay the fall of rains, which was badly needed "at the time to save the newly sown fields of guinea corn."<sup>69</sup> Although the prospectors received warnings by the elders, Campbell ignored them and continued to put up his flags. In the process, he was shot down with arrows and cut to pieces where he lay.<sup>70</sup> The killing of Campbell was perhaps more to do with the way he conducted himself in the area. Mr. Campbell was a veteran mining engineer who had already become notorious for his high-handed behaviour at Ririwain Kano.<sup>71</sup> He conducted his prospecting by uprooting peoples' crops. When he began the destruction of the crops, the village elders warned him of the potential consequences, but he chose to ignore them and continued his prospecting.<sup>72</sup> One of the villagers, Alaku Awazi, was very angry at

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> NAK SNP7/50: Nasarawa Province, Bohon Kurmi Patrol, 1912.

<sup>69</sup> PRO CO 446/105: Temple to the Colonial Office, Murder of Mr. Campbell, July 1912.

<sup>70</sup> SNP7/410: Provincial Administration, Nasarawa Province, 1912; SNP7/7359: Nasarawa Province, Annual Report 1912, 2 Volumes.

<sup>71</sup> NAK SNP15: Annual Report, Kano Province, 1909-1910.

<sup>72</sup> Mr. M. Namo, et al, group interview at Wulko, 29 November 2003.

the destruction of his *dorowa* (locust beans) and fired the first arrow, while Kuggah Motso was said to have been responsible for cutting Campbell into pieces.<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that the people of Wulko experienced bad harvests the previous year and the 1912 rainy season was not good either, perhaps explaining why uprooting of the crops provoked such a reaction.<sup>74</sup> The British response to the killing was to punish severely the people of the district. Captain Lawrence, the Resident of Nasarawa, instructed the District Officer of Akwanga that the “entire district must learn once and for all that the white man shall be regarded as sacred. To tie a European up, and murder him cannot be permitted to pass without the severest punishment.”<sup>75</sup>



**Figure 2.2:** The grave of Mr. Campbell at Gako, near Wulko

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> NAK SNP 2726: Lt. Governor Charles Temple to the Colonial Office, 1912.

<sup>75</sup> NAK SNP7/2812: Mada Patrol, 1912.

This instruction gave the soldiers the licence to kill, to loot and to destroy villages. The 1912 patrol to Wulko left Wamba and arrived at Gako on 22 May 1912, and the villages that were implicated in the murder were destroyed. Villagers of Guduba, who tried to protect Campbell, were rewarded £30 for their action.<sup>76</sup> The defences used by the Wulko people was described by Captain Hopkins, the commanding officer of the patrol: "the enemy placed great reliance on their fortification which were constructed with considerable skill. Stone walls topped with thorn bushes recessed to stop enfilade fire, and with cunningly concealed entrances, also thick thorn hedges with stone walls behind them were used by the enemy."<sup>77</sup> Despite their organised defences, they had no chance to withstand the firepower unleashed on them by the British troops. Colonial records document some of the atrocities and looting committed by the troops. For example, after the destruction of the villages, about 600 bundles of guinea corn were taken to Wamba and were rationed to all soldiers and camp followers.<sup>78</sup> Confiscation of food coming on top of the drought the villagers experienced the previous year resulted in the localised famine at Wulko in 1913.<sup>79</sup>

The 1912 patrol was the first major operation in Nasarawa province that recorded so many casualties on the side of the local people and the atrocities committed by the troops provoked condemnation by politicians and some sections of the British public. A Reuters correspondent in northern Nigeria reported the military patrol in the British press and the Secretary of State for the Colonies came

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<sup>76</sup> PRO CO 446/105: Temple to the Colonial Office, Murder of Mr. Campbell, July 1912

<sup>77</sup> PRO CO 446/106: Temple to the Colonial Office, Murder of Mr. Campbell, Mada Hills Punitive Patrol, September 1912.

<sup>78</sup> NAK SNP7/281: Mada Patrol, 1912.

<sup>79</sup> NAK 10/339p: Resident Nasarawa to Secretary, Northern Province, Mada District Famine, 1913.



under pressure to explain the military operation at Wulko.<sup>80</sup> Mr. Travers Buxton, the secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, wrote to the Colonial Office that his committee was worried about newspaper reports of the consequences of the measures taken by the Resident of Nasarawa that all “the villages implicated were destroyed [and] a large number of natives were killed.”<sup>81</sup> He wanted the Colonial Office to give his committee “further particulars as to this unfortunate occurrence, which is reported to have led to so heavy – and it may be indiscriminate – a punishment of the natives of the country over an apparently wide area.”<sup>82</sup> Mr. Harvey – Member of Parliament – raised the issue in the House of Commons on 25 July 1912, stating his concern about the report of the loss of lives and the destruction of property.<sup>83</sup> Mr. Temple, the Acting Governor of northern Nigeria, in a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, defended the action of the troops: “it can hardly be said that there was any unnecessary bloodshed and such natives as were killed were shot by the troops purely in self defence” although he admitted that the incident would have been avoided if Campbell, had been “discreet and listened to the warnings that were given to him.”<sup>84</sup> There were conflicting figures regarding the number of casualties, as the report by Captain Hopkins claimed that only nine people were killed and 170 injured, while Mr. Mair stated in his report that 131 people were killed.<sup>85</sup> The

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<sup>80</sup> *Times*, 19 June 1912, p.5.

<sup>81</sup> PRO CO 446/108: Murder of Mr. Campbell, July 1912.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> NAK SNP7/2726: Campbell D.A. Prospector Death of, 1912.

<sup>84</sup> PRO CO 446/106: Temple to the Colonial Office, Murder of Mr. Campbell, Mada Hills Punitive Patrol, September 1912.

<sup>85</sup> NAK SNP7/2726: Campbell D.A. Prospector Death of, 1912.

patrol on the other hand had ten soldiers wounded.<sup>86</sup> However, in a private letter from Mr. Lewis Vernon, the Secretary for State for Colonies to Mr. Harvey, he stated that during the expedition, there “were 125 casualties amongst the natives and several villages of grass huts had to be burnt.”<sup>87</sup> In his response to the figures given by Mr. Lewis, a senior official in the Colonial Office, who was asked to comment on the letter wrote: “you put the number at 125. This was the number in the main engagement, but the total number throughout the operation was 179.”<sup>88</sup>

Despite the conflicting figures of the casualties involved, it was clear that the troops used excessive force in handling the matter. Colonial correspondence was silent about the massacre of women and children during the patrol, which is still remembered by the local people. According to my informants, a group of women and children who hid in a large cave in the Wulko hills were killed when explosives were thrown into the cave.<sup>89</sup> Seeing their families killed and their homes and means of livelihood destroyed by the troops traumatised people that survived the patrol.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in his description of the Wulko patrol based on a series of interviews conducted in 1974, Dorward wrote:

The soldiers started setting houses ablaze and shooting all over. They started shooting until they came to a neighbouring village called Endehu, who were not involved. Soldiers pursued the Eggon even across to Wowen. When the Eggon

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> PRO CO 446/106: Temple to the Colonial Office, Murder of Mr. Campbell, Mada Hills Punitive Patrol, September 1912.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Mr. M. Namo, et al, group interview at Wulko, 29 November 2003.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

discovered so many were being killed, they ran inside a deep cave. They discovered they could not withstand the guns. They hid in the cave for some time. No one knows how, but the soldiers found them and started shooting inside and killed all but one woman, named Mashi Ekuembi. She was the only survivor from that place, she with her baby on her back. But because of seeing so much death, even this woman and her baby died of illness.<sup>91</sup>

The publicity and controversies that trailed the punitive expedition in Wulko meant that the colonial administration in Akwanga adopted a policy of avoiding “extreme measures” against the local people.<sup>92</sup> This “softly softly” approach meant that the subsequent tax assessment of Eggon villages was impossible because the British avoided the threat or use of force. Therefore a “nominal tribute” for 1913 was imposed on the district.<sup>93</sup> The Eggon made no attempt to pay their tax for 1913 and in order to enforce its payment, a military patrol was sanctioned in May 1914. The patrol had barely begun, when the troops were ordered to withdraw following the outbreak of the First World War and therefore, the 1913 taxes were never collected. The withdrawal of the troops was interpreted by the local people as the termination of British rule in the area and rumours quickly spread. There was a breakdown of law and order as the Eggon people took the laws into their own hands. Murders and robbery of Hausa traders

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<sup>91</sup> Dorward, “Ritual Warfare,” p.92.

<sup>92</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*; NAK SNP10/30p/1917: Mada Patrol, 1917.

were constantly reported, but the colonial administration could not deal with the situation because of the lack of troops as they were engaged either in Cameroon or in the East African campaign. The security situation deteriorated further and it became necessary for the colonial administration to take action. In July 1915, a small military patrol under Captain Waters and 50 troops with a machine gun was sanctioned.<sup>94</sup> Despite the military patrol, the Eggon made no effort to pay their taxes. It was reported that the “fighting men of a number of towns had bonded themselves together with a great oath in never to pay tribute, so long as two Madas [sic] were left in the world.”<sup>95</sup> As already mentioned, taxes were collected by the colonial administration were in grain, livestock and other valuable items. The only stored wealth of the Eggon were sheep and goats, so the Eggon were forced to pay taxes in livestock, which they resented. Parting with their livestock meant removing the source of fertilizer in the agricultural production, which affected the intensive hill agriculture.<sup>96</sup> They resolved that if the colonial administration wanted them to pay their taxes, “they would have to wait for their children to grow up, for it would never be paid by the existing generation of Madas [sic].”<sup>97</sup> The failure of the 1915 patrol further threw the Eggon district into chaos, as the troops were unable to restore law and order.

After the return of the WAFF from the Cameroon campaign, a military patrol was sanctioned in 1916 under Mr. Kirkpatrick, with 100 troops and a machine gun. Although the patrol succeeded in collecting the 1915 tax, it was

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<sup>94</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L. Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Baba Maluku and Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 10 June 2003.

<sup>97</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L. Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917.

unable to restore law and order. Before the troops even returned to Wamba, the divisional headquarter, there were reported murders of Hausa traders and two government messengers by the Eggon. A big caravan from Lafia to Ungwasheru was attacked and three men killed and two of the dead people belonged to the Lafia royal family.<sup>98</sup> Kirkpatrick regarded the raids by the Eggon as a “deliberate challenge to the administration” and therefore requested for another military patrol against them, which was sanctioned in 1917.<sup>99</sup> On 13 February 1917, a police escort under the command of Lt. Roe left Bakyeno Kassa with 25 troops and were met at Alizaga by Lt. Whitehead and Dr. Sharp, the Medical Officer.<sup>100</sup> When the patrol reached Alogani on 18 February, they were informed about an organised group of people determined to fight. The villages of Agwagi, Angwaku and Bakenu Bissa had fought a police patrol in 1916 and had refused to pay the 1917 tax. The success of the 1916 tax resistance gave the local people the courage to engage the patrol when it visited the area in 1917.<sup>101</sup> The colonial records similarly reported that the villagers had decided to engage the patrol because of their experience with the previous patrol in which they only lost two men, “less than casualties to be expected in an ordinary fight following an ordinary beer drink.”<sup>102</sup> When the troops were a thousand yards away from Awgwingi hill, their arrival was announced by the blowing of horns and by shouting. It was reported that due to the numbers of people (over a thousand) and the anticipated nature of resistance

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<sup>98</sup> NAK SNP10/30p/1917: Mada Patrol, 1917; PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L. Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917.

<sup>99</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L. Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> NAK SNP 10/30p: Mada Patrol, 1917.

to the patrol, the troops were compelled to withdraw, pending the arrival of reinforcements.<sup>103</sup> Unable to contend with the opposition, the commanding officer informed Norton Traill, the District Officer of Lafia, that “owing to the faulty ammunition supplied to him, and the paucity in numbers of the troops at his disposal that he did not consider himself justified in attempting to take the position in the face of such a strong and organised opposition.”<sup>104</sup> He was sure that if he could not quell the resistance, the opposition might spread into other areas. A military reinforcement was subsequently despatched to the area to strengthen the patrol. A second company and a machine gun arrived from Lokoja, but was still unable to penetrate the Eggon hills. Further reinforcements, a mountain gun and a detachment of troops from Kano were brought to the spot.<sup>105</sup> It was only under the cover of the mountain gun that the patrol was able to enter the hills.

The nature of resistance to the patrol was well organised and it is remembered that the people built defensive stone walls and held them with great tenacity. Also, peoples’ experiences of their previous defeats made them seek supernatural assistance. During the military encounter, the local people (as the present-day elders remembered) were inspired by the head of the *ashim* cult to resist the British authority.<sup>106</sup> The *and’ashim* (head of the cult) in consultation with the *mo’dako ashim* (elders) declared war on the British by blowing the buffalo horn (*eku*). Describing the instructions given by the *and’ashim*, Norton Traill, wrote: “after a while the noise died away and there was a perfect silence while the

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>105</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1918.

<sup>106</sup> Group interview at Angbaku with Kuje Kigbu, Ablika Gabi and Tsaku Musa, 1 March 2004.

‘juju’ man made his announcements...He gave it that ‘if the Madas had gone to the “white man,” they would have been defeated, but that as it was the other way about the victory would be the Madas.’”<sup>107</sup> Oaths were taken and the people fought side by side until the *and’ashim* was killed and they became demoralised. According to Norton Traill: “the Mada’s [sic] losses must have been very considerable but I believe that it was a lucky shell which landed right on the top of the Head juju man and blew him and his satellites to pieces which finally decided the issue.”<sup>108</sup> The patrol then moved to Lezin Lafia. All the villages in the area were subsequently visited and the ringleaders were arrested, tried and later hanged.<sup>109</sup> After a formal submission was made by the Eggon people, the Wamba Company remained in the hills under Mr. Mathews for some months after the Lokoja company and the gun detachment left the province.<sup>110</sup> In defence of the senseless killing of the Eggon people, the colonial administration used the same line of apology as it did for the Jengre massacre in Jos Plateau:

I regret that this loss of lives should have occurred, at the same time I do not see how it could have been avoided. I gave the natives every opportunity to meet in a friendly manner...it is evident that they had been for so many years accustomed to do as they pleased, having never been conquered by the Fulanes, that they had come to consider themselves

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<sup>107</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917; NAK SNP10/30p/1917: Mada Patrol 1917.

<sup>108</sup> NAK SNP9/2946/1924: Nasarawa Province, Unsettled Districts.

<sup>109</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1918.

<sup>110</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, pp.21-22.

invincible...they had no idea at all of the power of the white man.<sup>111</sup>

The police patrol of 1925 was the last major military operation in Akwanga, finally bringing the Mama people under effective British rule. Arden-Clarke, who arrived in Akwanga in 1922, was responsible for organising the patrol. Despite the beginning of British administration in Akwanga by 1911, a shortage of European officers meant that Mama remained without an effective British presence. Another reason for lack of supervision in the area was the location of the district, which added substantially to the difficulty of establishing colonial control. The area's hilly nature and the lack of roads and bridges across rivers made tours by colonial officials practically impossible, especially during the rainy season. With an increased number of colonial officials and less police engagements in other parts of the division by 1920s, attention began to be focused on the Mama people. Mama people were known for resisting the British by deserting their villages whenever a colonial officer managed to visit the area. Therefore, the aim of the patrol was to establish a British presence in the district to allow taxes to be easily collected and labour recruited for the construction of the infrastructure necessary for colonial rule. Arden-Clarke's biographer, Rooney argued that the Mama patrol was carried out in order to impose law and order in an area where lawlessness had become a way of life.<sup>112</sup> He maintained that the local people had an evil reputation and had become synonymous with "blood-evil-

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<sup>111</sup> NAK SNP 15/1 Acc. 40 on the report of Mr. Temple, Resident Bauchi, 1910.

<sup>112</sup> Rooney *Arden-Clarke*, p.26.



death.”<sup>113</sup> Arden-Clarke painted an exotic picture of the “barbarians” that needed to understand colonial law and order, describing them as “great bushy savages, magnificent physical specimens, bulging with muscle, stark naked all of them except for grass strings round their waist.”<sup>114</sup> He went on: “I wish you could see these people - I’m getting fairly used to them now, but when I first came here, even after my experience with other tribes...they struck me as the woolliest types of stark savagery that I should ever be likely to see.”<sup>115</sup> The patrol to Mama consisted of 40 police escorts under Mr. Clinton, the local police commissioner and one medical doctor. They assembled at Arum on 6 May 1925 and after a series of patrols, over 27 Mama villages were visited and most of them destroyed. Arden-Clarke reflected on the hideous way the patrol was carried out and wrote: “I always loathe this part of the job. It seems such a senseless wasteful bit of destruction.”<sup>116</sup> The operation came to an end on 23 August 1925.

Colonial rule in Akwanga was established and sustained by force. The major decider in the military contest was the Maxim gun. The independent nature and warlike attitudes of the peoples of Akwanga, who resisted the Hausa-Fulani depredations, was extended to the British. However, what marked the difference between the conquest of the peoples of Akwanga and some communities in central Nigeria was that the British followed the use of force to the latter in Akwanga, while adopting peaceful penetration in other areas. For example, the British abandoned the use of force in the conquest of the Tiv people and penetrated into

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Arden-Clarke’s letter to parents 25 February 1925.

<sup>115</sup> Arden-Clarke’s letter to parents 9 March 1925.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

the area by peaceful means. The Tiv were the largest of the non-Muslim groups that resisted British conquest in central Nigeria. Like the peoples of Akwanga, they had no central authority and therefore the defeat of one clan did not mean anything to the group as a whole. As already mentioned, there were clashes between the WAFF and the Tiv, but after 1906, there was a change in British tactics. The colonial administration resorted to peaceful penetration into Tivland and Captain Gordon, Resident of Muri province was responsible for bringing the Tiv people under the British rule without engaging in military confrontation.<sup>117</sup> There was no opposition to the British once Gordon had succeeded in convincing the compound heads that the British had come with the message of peace and were interested in trade. Only after he had convinced the patriarchs that he meant no harm and had secured his consent did Gordon moved ahead. Therefore, the British after 1907 established its rule amongst the Tiv by peaceful means while at the same time started a war conquest in Akwanga. The section below discusses how the peoples of Akwanga responded to the British conquest of the area.

## **THE RESPONSE TO COLONIAL CONQUEST IN AKWANGA**

Despite the military superiority of the European intruders and the brutality with which the invasion was carried out in some areas, the people in their various ways rejected the alien domination outright, or allied with the invaders and later rose against them. With the intrusion of colonial powers, Africans were faced with a choice of how to respond. Many African communities opposed the imposition of colonial rule from its inception. However, whenever this opposition gained

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<sup>117</sup> T. Tseror, "British Occupation of Tivland," *Mandyeng*, 2 (2002), pp.40-44.

momentum, the superiority of European military technology prevented any long-term success. Local resistance movements had some advantages in these conflicts, including the strategic value of fighting on their own soil and the mastering of the terrain, but they could not ultimately overcome the Maxim gun. Against the background of European military strength during the period of colonial subjugation, local people were left to decide whether to engage the colonial forces in a fight or negotiate in order to preserve their independence. African societies were often divided in their approach towards the colonial invaders in deciding whether to resist or accommodate them. For example, within the Sokoto Caliphate itself, each emir made his own decision to either resist or accommodate the British. Resistance to colonial rule in northern Nigeria was more prolonged among the communities in central Nigeria, who had had no previous experience of external rule. After the British occupied most parts of central Nigeria, resistance was muted, but the demand for tax and labour resulted in local revolts. However, these lacked enough organisation to threaten the grip of the British.

Colonial wars of conquest were mostly small wars because the availability of equipment and manpower were usually limited. In a handbook published by the British War Ministry, colonial wars of conquest were regarded as an expedition, "against savages and semi-civilized races by disciplined soldiers."<sup>118</sup> Therefore, wars of conquest were considered to be wars to spread civilization to a people that lacked western values. The firepower unleashed on the local people was

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<sup>118</sup> Quoted by J.M. Mackenzie (ed), *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950* (Manchester, 1992), p. 7.

considered legitimate in the face of an enemy who did not seem to understand the cultural code of a civilized method of warfare.

Resistance to colonial rule by African societies has generated a heated debate as to the role of the local people in accommodating or rejecting alien domination. A pioneering work by Terence Ranger on resistance to colonial rule in East and Central Africa, published in the late 1960s, explored the connection between resistance to the imposition of colonial rule – “primary resistance” – and modern nationalist movements – “secondary resistance” -. <sup>119</sup> Thus, the concept of resistance became the historical dimension of African nationalism. <sup>120</sup> Although early resistance movements in parts of Africa were a source of inspiration to some of the liberation struggles taking place in the 1960s and 1970s, Ranger raised a doubt whether this connection represented more than a “continuity of resistance”. <sup>121</sup> For example, he argued that the Shona struggle for independence did not represent a “return to the values of the society engaged in the 1896 rising” and that the current struggle could not be informed by continuing Shona or Ndebele cultural forms. <sup>122</sup> Ranger wondered whether the debate about continuity or discontinuity of manifestations of resistance should not be transcended by

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<sup>119</sup> T. Ranger, “Connexions between ‘Primary Resistance Movements’ and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa” *JAH*, 9(1968), 437-52.

<sup>120</sup> L. Vail and L. White, ‘Forms of Resistance: Song and Perceptions of Power in Colonial Mozambique, in D. Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London, 1986), 193.

<sup>121</sup> T. Ranger, ‘Resistance in Africa: From Nationalist Revolt to Agrarian Protest, in G.Y. Okihiro (ed.), *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Amherst, 1986), 49.

<sup>122</sup> T. Ranger, “The People in African Resistance: A Review,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4 (1977), 130.

periodization of African history involving a series of qualitative transformations.<sup>123</sup>

A critique emerged in the late 1970s, questioning the link between primary resistance and nationalist struggle. The linkage between primary resistance to colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the modern nationalist movements of the 1950s and 1960s was regarded as “extremely elitist, a bias contemporary African historians share with their Eurocentric predecessors.”<sup>124</sup> In other words, the earlier resistance thesis was criticised for being narrowly focused on elite politics; for the near exclusion of women and peasants; and for an undifferentiated view of these latter groups when they appeared at all. Thus, Marxist paradigms inspired a shift away from the search for the roots of nationalism to the search for the causes of underdevelopment. Part of what drove this critique was a concern with class and class identities. Scholars sought to identify the “faceless masses” and in so doing, they asked whether one could speak of primary resisters and nationalist leaders in the same breath. Class divisions, based on people's relation to pre-colonial and colonial modes of production, held out the possibility that initial resistance and nationalist struggle composed historically distinct and separate processes. The concern with economic differentiation in African societies drove a new generation of scholarship through the 1980s. While casting doubt on the connection between primary and nationalist resistance, this generation did not drop the resistance paradigm but rather drew on

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 145-6.

<sup>124</sup> A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, “Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa,” *IJAH*, 10 (1977), 39.

materialist perspectives to locate indigenous resistance within the broader framework of class struggle.

The concept of resistance is difficult to define as some scholars viewed certain actions, like theft, migration, fighting and desertion as different forms of resistance. Crummy observed that resistance could be mute with stealth being one of its principal characteristics while, Isaacman portrayed, for example, the withholding of labour for cotton production by Mozambican peasants as an act of resistance.<sup>125</sup> Other scholars objected to the extension of the concept of resistance to cover different forms of action to the point of including “everything from foot dragging and dissimulation to social banditry, arson, poaching, theft, avoidance of conscription, desertion, migration and riot.”<sup>126</sup> However, Van Walraven and Abbink employed the concept of resistance to signify:

Intensions and concrete actions taken to oppose others and refuse to accept their ideas, actions or positions for a variety of reasons, the most common being the perception of the position, claims or actions taken by others as unjust, illegitimate or intolerable attempts at domination. The concrete acts of resistance involved may or may not be acts of physical violence and extended also to other spheres of human behaviour.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> D. Crummey, “Introduction: The Great Beast,” in Crummey, *Banditry Rebellion*, 10; Isaacman *et al*, “Resistance and Collaboration”, 11.

<sup>126</sup> Vail and White, “Forms of Resistance,” 195.

<sup>127</sup> Jon Abbink *et al*, *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden, 2003), 8.

Generally, the response to European domination in Africa until recently has been categorised into two types, collaboration and resistance. The categorisation of the response to colonial domination into resistance and collaboration seems inadequate to explain the phenomenon. Both resistance and collaboration by Africans to the colonial invaders can be seen as the pursuance of interests and not as irrational instinctive reactions. The complicated nature of inter-play between African and European interests was "far more subtle than the arbitrary division into progressive collaborators and reactionary resisters."<sup>128</sup> John Lonsdale argues that in order to "understand the contrary human intentions one needs first to grasp an underlying process. But the process is, again, a dual one, the building of states and articulations, or contradictory junction, of pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production."<sup>129</sup> He asserts that virtually all Africans negotiated working accommodations with Europeans until Europeans made it impossible, and that those who fought fiercely like Samory did so only as a last resort when their European allies betrayed them.<sup>130</sup>

Collaboration during the colonial period was difficult to define and it did not represent consistent loyalty, as the allegiance of groups and individuals shifted as the value of the alliance with the colonial state changed.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, collaboration could be described as a "convergence of interests between colonial states and individual groups or classes of colonized society."<sup>132</sup> At the time of

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<sup>128</sup> R. Collins (ed), *Historical Problems of Imperial Africa* (Revised edition: Princeton, 2000), pp.57-58.

<sup>129</sup> J. Lonsdale, "The European Scramble and Conquest in African History," in R. Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (eds), *The Cambridge History of Africa* Vol.6 (Cambridge, 1985), p.728.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p.731.

<sup>131</sup> W. Beinart and C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa* (London, 1987), pp.28-9.

<sup>132</sup> J. Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, 1997), p.64.

colonial conquest, the British had to rely on the indigenous people for troops and carriers who were essential to the conquest. After colonial subjugation, collaboration was also needed for the smooth running of the political structures that were established for administration. Direct administration by the British could not be carried out from London due to lack of adequate manpower and resources. In other words, during and after the period of the conquest, collaboration became necessary, as domination could not have been achieved through direct intervention from London.

The colonial subjugation of the peoples of Akwanga was resisted from the start. The questions that need to be answered include: was resistance general or exceptional among the local people in the area? Why did the resistance last until 1925? Although resistance was widespread in the whole of the division, it was most intensive among the Eggon people in the southern part of the region. As noted earlier, the two major military confrontations between the British and local people in Nasarawa province were with the Eggon in 1912 and 1917. The peoples of the area had had a long tradition of resistance against the slave raiders from Zaria, Bauchi and the sub-emirates of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a who were kept at bay. The British, with superior weaponry and resources were able to impose their control over the people. Despite the use of these sophisticated weapons, the British found it difficult to establish effectively their rule until after the 1917 patrol, by which, for the first time in their history, the Eggon people were really subdued.<sup>133</sup> However, after these defeats, the local people continued to frustrate the colonial administration and, in 1925, during the Mama patrol, Arden-Clarke wrote: "I shall

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<sup>133</sup> NAK SNP9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922.



of course go on walloping them until they surrender.”<sup>134</sup> The resistance resulted in the meting out of brutal treatment by the colonial forces. It should be noted that after the 1912 and 1917 patrols, the area became a political hotspot in parliamentary debates at Westminster and the colonial administrators were closely watched. Arden-Clarke in a letter to his parents commented:

The powers that be are so frightened of questions in parliament when some idiot gets up and says he has heard of brutal treatment meted out to some poor helpless natives - the ‘poor helpless native’ being a bunch of Mada with sheaves of poisoned arrows and bristling with swords and spears, spending his energies in getting his fellow ‘helpless natives’ to drive out the white man.<sup>135</sup>

Local settlement patterns contributed to the prolonged nature of colonial conquest of Akwanga region. The fortress-like hill settlements of the Eggon were militarily significant and they presented a great problem for the British, who had difficulty in penetrating the hills. As already discussed, the British had to use reinforcements and artillery to be able to break the resistance of the Eggon people in 1917. Furthermore, the people had no single authority around which power was centred and they lived independently as clans and lineages in villages. This meant that the British had to fight from village to village and in some instances from

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<sup>134</sup> Arden-Clark’s letter to parents 24 March 1925.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 6 June 1922.

house to house in order to subdue the local people, who did not recognise any authority outside their own households.

Another reason for the long resistance to British rule by the peoples of Akwanga was the fact that attention was focused on more "profitable," bigger and organised polities rather than on areas with a small resource base. In other words, the British conquered major areas first and later gave attention to smaller communities like those of Akwanga. The case of Mama district clearly showed that despite the establishment of colonial rule in the area, there was not much British supervision due to the lack of personnel. The police patrol of 1925 was an attempt by the British to re-establish their presence among the communities in the area.

The British had local collaborators who were later utilised in the administration of the newly acquired territories. The penetration of the British into Akwanga as noted earlier was carried out from three centres and the people of the sub-emirates allied themselves with the British. They gave out information about the peoples of Akwanga and they were also used as soldiers and guides during the conquest of the area. They therefore became the allies of the British in their wars of conquest and were rewarded for such. For example, Bashayi, the first District Head of Central Mada and later of South Mada, was originally a Fulani from Keffi. Also, within the communities of Akwanga, the British had to rely on their local collaborators to achieve their aims. British penetration into the north of the division was through Jama'a and Nunku village was one of the first in the northern part of the division to come into contact with the British. The villagers did not

resist colonial conquest and as a result, the first District Head of North Mada was appointed from the Nunku clan. The British further used the Nunku people as sources of intelligence and also as guides in their wars with other Mada villages.<sup>136</sup> The marriage of convenience between the Nunku clan and the British in the administration of North Mada district made other Mada clans consider them as *mane ban tsu* “people of death,” due to the reign of terror unleashed by the ruling elites in the performance of their duties.<sup>137</sup>

One of the advantages of collaboration for the British was that it minimised their own administrative responsibilities in the early stages of colonial rule. The collaborators enjoyed certain privileges from the colonial administration. They were given leadership positions and, during military operations, their houses and families were spared. The conditions of those that were friendly towards the British and those that were not has been summarised by Arden-Clarke, in the village of Arum in 1925:

We settled down and smashed to pieces all the compounds in the village except those of people I know to be really friendly and doing their best to help me. As far as I am concerned there is no such thing as neutrality; a man is either an active friend of the administration or he is an enemy. If an enemy, his compound is levelled to the ground and the grass roof burnt.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Bala Maishai at Kanbar, 14 November 2003.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Arden-Clarke's letter to parents 24 March 1925.

The severity of the punishments meted out to those that were not sympathetic to the colonial administration were carried out in order to instil fear in them and also to demonstrate to them that, if they abandoned any form of resistance, their security would be guaranteed. Within the colonial circle, some officials expressed reservations about the extreme measures taken during military patrols. According to Arden-Clarke, "It's rather a piteous sight watching a village being knocked to pieces and I wish there was some other way but unfortunately there isn't."<sup>139</sup> It is untrue to suggest, as Arden-Clarke did, that there was no other option open to the colonial government in the method of handling such rebellions. The colonial administration refused to acknowledge the root causes of the peoples' grievances. They assumed that by terrorising the people, they would have a change of heart. It was the general consensus among the people interviewed that if only the colonialists had been diplomatic and had addressed their problems, they would not have found it necessary to continue with their resistance.

## CONCLUSION

The fiercely independent attitudes of the peoples of Akwanga, who had long fought off incursions by Hausa-Fulani raiders and state-builders in the nineteenth century, were extended to the British when they arrived in the region at the beginning of the twentieth century. Resistance against the British conquest was seen as a continuation of nineteenth-century struggles to preserve local independence from the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. Apart from a few European officers, the bulk of the soldiers used for the conquest of Akwanga were

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

Hausa-Fulani. Colonial forces followed the same routes used by the slave raiders. Despite the resistance, the superiority of European arms decided the war in favour of the British. However, after the subjugation of the region, the British were faced with the problem of controlling and administering local peoples. The British had to establish structures which were necessary for the overall supervision of the conquered territories. The chapter that follows examines the establishment and functions of these administrative institutions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **INDIRECT RULE AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIVE ADMINISTRATION, 1913-1936**

This chapter examines the development of the indirect rule system and native administration in Akwanga. It places emphasis on the administrative policies pursued by Lugard, Clifford, Palmer and Cameron, who became Governors of Nigeria and how such policies changed the socio-political structures of the region. An integral part of the indirect rule system was taxation, and the assessment and collection of taxes required the stationing of colonial agents. Lugard began to implement the indirect rule system in Akwanga by extending the jurisdiction of the emirs of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a to the peoples of the area in 1905. However, the jurisdiction of the emirs was terminated in 1913 and five districts were created, marking the beginning of the operation of native administration. The attempt to find an acceptable system of administration resulted in a series of organisations and reorganisations, which transformed the pre-existing social, political and geographical boundaries of the peoples of Akwanga.

#### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM**

After the military subjugation of the "tribal" peoples of central Nigeria, the main problem faced by the British was how to make colonial rule function in areas without any central authority. The system of indirect rule was introduced in part to alleviate the shortage of European staff in northern Nigeria. Local chiefs were

therefore allowed to rule under the supervision of the British. Areas without chiefs, like the communities in Akwanga, had District Heads arbitrarily appointed for them. The Native Administration formed the basis of the state apparatus that was used for the recruitment of labour, collecting taxes and maintaining law and order. Lugard saw the Native Administration as the people's contribution towards their own development.

With the development of indirect rule, Lugard tried to draw together different ideas into a comprehensive theory of colonial policy that could be applied to the African colonies. In describing the system of colonial administration in northern Nigeria, he argued that the "British role here is to bring to the country all the gains of civilisation by applied science (whether in the development of material resources, or the eradication of disease, etc) with as little interference as possible with native customs and modes of thought."<sup>1</sup> Indirect rule was originally intended by Lugard to be a flexible and adaptable approach for local government, with a central, colonial administration of British officials for general government. Preserving traditional authorities, according to him, would provide continuity with the past and into the future. This was due to the fact that European officials would come and go, but indigenous officials would remain. Furthermore, the system of indirect rule was designed to demonstrate the degree of British non-involvement in the pre-existing political organisation. Co-operation of the indigenous rulers was sought after (in places where they existed) and, in the areas where they were lacking, chiefs were appointed and given powers which had no traditional basis.

The arguments advanced by Lugard for the introduction of indirect rule should not be taken at face value. There was more to it than the superficial

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<sup>1</sup> F. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Third Edition: London, 1926), p.196.

assumption that the people were allowed to rule themselves. Firstly, the size of northern Nigeria, coupled with the difficulties of communication and means of transportation, made direct British rule practically impossible. The expenditure necessary to maintain such a huge amount of personnel would have been considered by the British government to be quite disproportionate to the prospects that the region held, which was contrary to the idea of colonies being self-sustaining. The experience of the Royal Niger Company has shown that despite the company's limited administrative influence in northern Nigeria, its expenditure on the region was supplemented from the profits accrued from the palm oil trade in the Niger Delta.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, direct British administration would have been impossible because it was difficult to attract British people of the right type and education in large numbers for services in Nigeria. Until the 1930s, the majority of colonial officials recruited to work in Nigeria had no any formal qualification, so Lugard had to look locally for the manpower that was necessary to administer the new conquered territories.

In administering British rule in northern Nigeria, Lugard clearly spelt out how the region should be organised. He divided the region into provinces and divisions and defined the roles of the colonial officials involved in the operation of the indirect rule system. Northern Nigeria as a whole was under a single Governor, while each province was an individual entity under the control of a Resident. The duty of the Resident, according to Lugard, was "to carry out loyally, the policy of the Governor and not to inaugurate policies of his own."<sup>3</sup> The Resident was the senior government official in the province and represented the Governor in all

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<sup>2</sup> Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, pp.93-126.

<sup>3</sup> F. Lugard, *Political Memoranda: Revision of Instructions to Political Officers on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative, 1913-1918*, with a new introduction by A.H.M. Kirk-Greene (Third Edition: London, 1970), p.10.



administrative matters. The provinces were organised into administrative divisions with a District Officer (DO) or Assistant District Officer (ADO) in charge of each. The District Officers were answerable to the Residents and the actual day-to-day administration of the area under the Resident was entrusted to the hands of the local rulers who were supervised by the District Officers. The constant supervision of the local rulers by the colonial officials resulted in the policy being regarded by Crowder as "interventionist indirect rule."<sup>4</sup> The operation of the indirect rule system was based on cooperation between the colonial officials and the local rulers. These local rulers became the Native Authorities of their respective areas and were an integral part of the consolidation and sustenance of British rule in northern Nigeria. In accordance with the new Lugardian system, local rulers were sworn into office by appointment and were graded with a variable salary. This, according to him, would undermine the autocratic and exploitative nature of the ruling class. In his words, "the ruling class are no longer either demi-gods or parasites preying on the community, they must work for the stipend and position they enjoy."<sup>5</sup> The basis for the appointment of the local rulers was loyalty to the new colonial state, and their recognition by the government was based on dictated terms and conditions given to them.

In Akwanga, the communities had not evolved a ruling class (like those of the northern emirates) to which the British could give colonial authority. The independent nature of the groups in the area meant that the British would have had to maintain more than one chief to administer a territory with a population smaller than any of the emirates, which were being effectively ruled by a single emir. From 1900 to 1919, the emirate model of indirect rule was applied throughout northern Nigeria,

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<sup>4</sup> M. Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* (London, 1968), p.217.

<sup>5</sup> Lugard, *Dual Mandate*, pp.203-204.

but the system proved unworkable with the traditions of the peoples of central Nigeria and was reconsidered in the period 1919 to 1936. The development of Native Authorities in northern Nigeria can be analysed in four phases. According to Ballard, there were four major attempts by the successive Governors of Nigeria to make Native Authorities acceptable to the pagan societies based on the system of indirect rule.<sup>6</sup> The first phase was the creation of paramount chiefs in areas in which they did not exist. Although, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the villages of Nunku and Ungwaseru began to evolve an embryonic central political structure in the late nineteenth century, most of the communities in Akwanga did not go beyond the level of the clan or village group administration.

Lugard's comprehensive scheme of tax reform had profound consequences for the implementation of the indirect rule system. The assessment and collection of taxes required the existence of a clearly defined territorial administration. Lugard toured the Northern Provinces during 1904-5 and he laid down uniform administrative structures, defining jurisdiction in terms of taxation and approving divisional boundaries. The arrangement called for a paramount chief in each province, with subsidiary chiefs or District Heads in their divisions. During Lugard's tour of Nasarawa province, he approved the creation of Lafia, Keffi and Jama'a divisions and gave the emirs jurisdiction over the peoples of Akwanga, who were hitherto independent of these sub-emirates.<sup>7</sup> The Eggon, for example, were included in the Assaikio district of the Lafia emirate, but the power of the emir was negligible and any power that existed was created and backed by the British administration.<sup>8</sup> However, the jurisdiction of the emir of Lafia over the Eggon ended in 1911 and

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<sup>6</sup> J.A. Ballard, 'Pagan Administration' and Political Development in Northern Nigeria," *Savanna*, 1 (Zaria, 1972), pp.1-14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province - Administration of, 1922.

therefore the Eggon were separated from the rest of the Assaikio district and were administered directly through the Divisional Officer of Lafia.<sup>9</sup>

After Lugard's brief departure from Nigeria in 1906, the pressure for the application of the indirect rule system in northern Nigeria was relaxed by his successor, Sir Percy Girouard. However, on Lugard's return in 1912, with the mandate of amalgamating northern and southern Nigeria, his major concern was to unify the divergent administrative policies in these regions. Whereas the northern administration had "a native policy whose aim was primarily administrative," southern policy was "commercial and directed primarily to the development of resources and trade."<sup>10</sup> Lugard saw the decentralised societies of both north and south as "tribes in the lowest stage of primitive savagery, without any central organisation" and "the first step is to endeavour to find a man of influence as chief, and to group under him as many villages and districts as possible."<sup>11</sup>

Finding men of influence amongst the decentralized communities in both southern and northern Nigeria to be appointed as leaders of the Native Authorities became problematic. In southern Nigeria, for example, the colonial officials had never been able to make indirect rule work. The native administration system was destined to fail in the south even before it became operational because of the contempt Lugard had for the administrative arrangement of the region. Lugard looked at the government of the south with something close to disgust, which was "unnatural for an administrator bred in the Northern emirates."<sup>12</sup> In addition, Lugard's earlier encounter with the southern administration in the early phase of British rule left much to be desired. The northern and southern administration had

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Lugard's constitutional proposal, 1913, A.H.M. Kirk-Greene (ed), *Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record* (London, 1968), p.225.

<sup>11</sup> Lugard, *Political Memo*, pp.193-198.

<sup>12</sup> Kirk-Greene, *Lugard and the Amalgamation*, p.14.

quarrelled over boundary questions and railway policy as well as over the division of customs revenue collected by the southern administration on goods which later found their way into northern Nigeria. In order to make indirect rule function in the southern Nigeria, Lugard subjected the region, "to a searching examination by the standards of northern administration," and "decided that what was needed was the creation of an administration."<sup>13</sup> The programme of remodelling the local political administration in the south was the attempt to establish the Native Authority with a single chief in different parts of the region with their native treasuries and prisons. The attempt at implementing indirect rule based on the Native Authority system to the decentralised peoples of southern Nigeria failed. The major difficulty that the British encountered was finding local people with authority that was acceptable to the communities. The newly created chiefly offices had no traditional basis and the power bestowed on the chiefs was invented and backed by the colonial administration. According to Afigbo, the Native Authorities created did not have traditional basis and some of these chiefs appointed were strangers to the communities which they were imposed as Native Authorities.<sup>14</sup> This was one of the major reasons that resulted in the failure of the indirect rule system in the region. Afigbo argued that the indirect rule system would have succeeded in the south if the British had learned that chiefly rule was not possible in every society and also, if the local people recognised that their "traditional system of democratic village republics needed substantial modification."<sup>15</sup>

Like in southern Nigeria, the British administration in Akwanga had a difficult task in finding men of influence amongst the local peoples to be appointed

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<sup>13</sup> Perham, *Native Administration*, pp. 61; Kirk-Greene, *Lugard and the Amalgamation*, p.14.

<sup>14</sup> A.E. Afigbo *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in South Eastern Nigeria, 1891-1929* (Harlow, 1972), pp.118-161.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 305.

as District Heads and colonial officials almost inevitably fell back upon the practice of direct administration or the use of an alien District Head. Although an Assistant Resident was appointed for Akwanga in 1911, British administrative presence was hardly established in the region. The jurisdiction of the emirs of Keffi and Jama'a over the Mada and some of the Eggon villages continued until 1913, when it was ended on the instructions of Mr. Temple (Lugard's Deputy) when he visited Nasarawa province. This was made possible by the transfer of troops from Keffi to Wamba and the removal of the Lafia Divisional Headquarters from Lafia town to Wamba in 1912.<sup>16</sup> Temple's approval was immediately followed by the creation of five districts: South Mada, North Mada, Central Mada, Mama and Nungu districts.<sup>17</sup> The North Mada were "put under a chief of their own nationality, who was given a council to aid him, Central Madas were put under Isiyaku Bashayi, a son of the Royal Family of Keffi" and South Mada was administered directly by the Divisional Officer of Lafia.<sup>18</sup> Mama district did not have its own District Head, but was under a group of important village heads of the area while Nungu district had its own District Head. The stationing of these District Heads as agents of colonial administration was essential for the consolidation and sustenance of colonial rule in the region. They were given new status and power, and became the most important people in their respective districts. Village heads in their respective districts assisted the District Heads. They were nominated by the elders of their respect villages to the District Head for approval.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, by 1913, the emirate model of indirect rule became functional in Akwanga. In the spirit of the indirect rule system, the District Heads were supposed

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<sup>16</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province - Administration of, 1922.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L. Norton Traill Correspondence, 1917.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with the late Ali Anfani at Akwanga, 20 March 2003.

to be local people rather than outsiders. However, as already mentioned, Bashayi, who was Fulani from Keffi, was appointed as the District Head of Central Mada.<sup>20</sup> The colonial administration hoped that his appointment would bring some experience in native administration to Akwanga:

The ostensible *raison d'être* for the appointment to this alien District Head Bashayi, was that being a man of superior intellect, accustomed to British Administration and cognizant of its aims, he would inculcate this knowledge among the village heads, train them in administrative matters and build up their authority, so that in a few years time they would be able to assume the administration of the tribe by themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Bashayi began to settle into his new office by encouraging Hausa-Fulani to settle in Akwanga. According to Jibren Mu'azu, the present-day *sarkin* Hausawa of Akwanga, "it was Bashayi who encouraged my grandfather to settle in Akwanga. Bashayi needed people around him who understood the importance of being royal and because Hausawa were obedient to the authority established over them, he persuaded them to settle with him and help administer the area."<sup>22</sup> The number of Hausa that settled in Akwanga, especially at the Central Mada district in the early stage of Bashayi's rule, is not clear from oral information and colonial records, but the number increased during the construction of the Eastern railway line that passed through Gudi from 1923 to 1927. In 1922 there were 185 Hausa people in Akwanga town and also a number of others in Gudi.<sup>23</sup> Those that settled at Gudi were mostly

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<sup>20</sup> Bashayi was the son of an Eggon concubine.

<sup>21</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province, Administration of, 1922.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Jibren Mu'azu at Akwanga, 4 May 2004.

<sup>23</sup> NAK SNP 9/617: Central Mada District, Lafia Division, Nasarawa Province, 1922.

labourers employed in the construction of the railway line.<sup>24</sup> Bashayi's office was in Akwanga town and he employed Hausa immigrants as his *jakadu* (ambassadors), who administered the villages under his jurisdiction.<sup>25</sup> The *jakadu* were stationed at Kurmin Tagwaye, Gaji, Alushi, Gudi and Gwadi and they served as tax collectors and judges, thereby undermining the authority of the newly constituted village heads and elders who were supposed to assist Bashayi in running the district.<sup>26</sup> Despite the appointment of an alien District Head and the illegal employment of the *jakadu* to assist Bashayi, the colonial administration allowed the practice to continue undisturbed.



**Figure 3.1:**The late Alhaji Mohammadu Kore, the first chief of Wamba

In the South Mada district, the Divisional Officer of Lafia supervised the administration of the district through the village heads and *mo'dako ashim* (elders). The lack of consensus among the Eggon elders meant that it was impossible to

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ahmadu Salihu at Gudi, 22 March 2004. In addition to the Hausa immigrants, the Tiv, Yoruba and Igbo labourers in the Eastern railway began to settle in Akwanga.

<sup>25</sup> NAK Jos Prof 58/1927: Akwanga Division Report on for year 1926.

<sup>26</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province - Administration of, 1922.

appoint a District Head amongst them.<sup>27</sup> The Mada had Zumbi, who the emir of Jama'a styled as *sarkin* Nunku appointed as the District Head of North Mada with the *banlunku* (elders) to assist him in the administration of the district. This was the first time that the whole of the Mada villages had come under a central authority. Thus, by 1913, the machinery for native administration was put in place. The staff needed to run other departments of the native administration, such as the native treasury (established in 1914), prisons and police, had to be employed from outside Akwanga. The lack of colonial education and administrative skills amongst the local peoples meant that immigrants occupied senior positions in the central administration office in Wamba, while locals were employed mostly as cleaners and messengers. The dominance of the immigrant group at the divisional headquarters created friction with the local staff. This friction, as observed by the District Officer, "is an uneasy combination of 'strangers' and locals" which resulted in jealousy.<sup>28</sup> This created a great deal of tension and suspicion between the immigrants and the local staff and thus, made it difficult for the District Officer to run the administration smoothly.<sup>29</sup>

Although there are no available figures for the number of immigrants at the early period of the native administration, by 1932, out of the three district scribes, two were immigrants, as were all the three court scribes and the joint district and court scribe for Mama district.<sup>30</sup> Other immigrants included the *ma'aji* (treasurer) who was from Zaria, the head of the government police who was from Bauchi, the gaoler of the NA prison who was from Yola and the staff of the public works

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<sup>27</sup> NAK Jos Prof 488, Volume II: The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of Intelligence Report on, 1935.

<sup>28</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5422: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report 1943-44.

<sup>29</sup> As quoted in NAK Jos Prof 5422: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report 1943-44.

<sup>30</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44: Southern Division, Report on for 1932.



department who were all immigrants.<sup>31</sup> Generally, the creation of chiefs where they did not exist was extended to other decentralised societies after the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria in 1914.

After the final departure of Lugard from Nigeria in 1918, his policy of native administration amongst the decentralised societies was challenged and reinterpreted. Sir Hugh Clifford, Lugard's successor as Governor, attempted to correct what he considered to be the shortcomings of indirect rule. This included, for example, the creation of chiefs where they had not existed before the coming of the British. He proposed the creation of bigger chiefdoms (through the amalgamation of the various chiefs) under a chairman and ordered the revision of the criteria for the creation of chiefs where none existed previously.<sup>32</sup> Clifford's major concern was to open up all Nigeria to development and to end what he saw as the isolation of the Northern Provinces from external modernising influences. Although he considered the emirate model of indirect rule suitable for the emirates, he disagreed with its application to the decentralised societies. He proposed to allow the provinces to pursue a variety of Native Administration policies under central direction from Lagos.<sup>33</sup> In a memo circulated to all northern officers in the colonial service, Clifford proposed:

I think we should abandon once and for all the expectation of ever converting...primitive tribal systems (such as they are) into any sort of semblance to the Native Administrations of the Muhammadan Emirates, and should content ourselves with making of the former only such as experience may show to be at once safe and expedient, while causing the people to feel, individually and collectively that

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> PRO CO 583/80: Clifford to Milner, December 1919.

the district officer is the real, *de facto* ruler of their country, and their sure Court of Appeal and refuge when in trouble.<sup>34</sup>

The Colonial Office rejected the major changes in the operation of indirect rule system that Clifford proposed. In a memo by the Colonial Office:

We should tell Clifford politely but firmly, that we did not send him to Nigeria to upset everything which his predecessor had done...his attacks on the policy of his predecessor and on the administration of Northern Nigeria are entirely contrary to the wishes of the Secretary of State, who fully approves the general lines of that policy and has no intention of allowing it to be reversed [therefore], the Lugardian system in its main principle be upheld.<sup>35</sup>

However, the Colonial Office modified Clifford's recommendations, which were embodied in the 1922 constitution ("the Clifford constitution"). While administration in the north was left untouched, a new legislative council was established for the southern regions. The Colonial Office also approved changes regarding the direct administration by colonial officials, which made way for the re-organisation exercise carried out in the Northern Provinces in 1922. In Akwanga, a major re-organisation was proposed in order to end the direct administration of Eggon by the Divisional Officer of Lafia. The proposal was put forward by Arden-Clarke (an Assistant District Officer) in 1922. He went further by attempting the creation of an independent "pagan" emirate with Bashayi as the emir. His first tour in the division

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<sup>34</sup> NAK SNP7/4046 Vol. 1: Minutes, Clifford to Political Officers, June 1920.

<sup>35</sup> PRO CO 583/80: Memo, Colonial Office to Clifford, 1920.

resulted in the proposed re-organisation and he described the scheme in a letter to his parents:

This Division is divided into two halves, one half consisting of the Emir of Lafia and his territories, the other half of five independent districts, three Mada districts, North, Central and South, the Mama district and the Nungu district. My scheme roughly is to turn the three Mada districts at present divided by no proper geographical or ethnological boundary into two districts following a clearly defined boundary separating the two big Mada clans. Each of these districts will have its own paramount chief as District Head and both districts will be under a man called Bashai - a very sound fellow. The Nungu District is also to be brought under his control and later on the Mada, when we have educated them a little. Then we will form a small independent emirate consisting of four tribes as clans, each with their own District Head, who is going to be responsible to us.<sup>36</sup>

The scheme was to create an independent "pagan emirate" with the Mada and Eggon villages to be divided between the sub-emirates of Keffi and Lafia. This was the first step, according to Arden-Clarke, of combining "all these independent raw pagan districts into one emirate."<sup>37</sup> Arden-Clarke, like other colonial officials, was obsessed with the transformation of the "pagan areas" into something resembling the emirate system. The Lieutenant Governor rejected the idea of dividing the people and

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<sup>36</sup> Arden-Clarke's letter to parents, 24 February 1922

<sup>37</sup> Arden-Clarke's letter to parents, 28 January 1922

creating an independent "pagan emirate." A memorandum from the Secretary of Northern Provinces stated:

His Honour is also strongly opposed to the idea of the creation of an entirely artificial so-called 'pagan emirate' with a pagan 'Emir' ruling over the two Mada Districts - the Nungus and the Mamas - with the majority of whom he would have no historical nor ethnological connection. These tribes had much better be administered by their own tribal chiefs.<sup>38</sup>

The suggestion therefore that Bashayi should found his dynasty over the "pagan emirate" was rejected. Bashayi, according to the Secretary, ascended to the district headship "based on his personal character and not on blood, and he has no more right to be made a 'pagan emir' than Cromwell had to be King of England."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, instead of creating an independent "pagan emirate" the Central Mada district was abolished and the Mada and Eggon were divided into two independent districts, namely, North and South Mada districts respectively. The Mada and Eggon villages that were formerly in the central Mada district were transferred to the newly created districts "so that the district boundaries may conform with the tribal boundaries."<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the re-organisation did not only divide "the area into district conforming with the inter-tribal boundary, but provides a District Headman over those Hill Mada villages which hitherto formed South Mada District."<sup>41</sup> The District Officer's authority was transferred to Bashayi, who was therefore appointed as the first District Head of Eggon. One of my informants considered the 1922 re-

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<sup>38</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province-Administration of, 1922.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L. Norton Trail Correspondence, 1922.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

organisation merely as the transfer of Bashayi from Akwanga to Wana.<sup>42</sup> He believed that Bashayi was transferred because he ordered his men to flog Ahmadu, the representative of Abubakar (*Sarkin Nunku*) during the construction of a local road. When he reported the incident to Abubakar, the District Head wrote a letter to the District Officer and informed him that Bashayi was installed for the Eggon and not for the Mada people and therefore should be transferred to his rightful place. This, according to him, was the reason for the movement of Bashayi to the Eggon hills.<sup>43</sup>

The Eggon people however, resisted the appointment of Bashayi as the new District Head of South Mada. Their concern lay in the fact that Bashayi was Fulani. This created tension between the colonial government and the Eggon people and in an attempt to bring the two sides together, Arden-Clarke had to tour with the new District Head before he took over the administration of the area. In trying to resolve the crisis, Arden-Clarke decided to divide the opposition by setting the Village Heads at each other. In a letter to his parents, he wrote:

I am up at Lazin-Lafia in the Mada Hills...well the jolly old Alogani wants to be District Head in place of Bashai [sic]. All the Madas are rather afraid of Bashai as he is a real live man, he gets things done...My job is to get Bashai accepted in face of this opposition...Here is how I hope to work the thing out. Its on the jolly old Roman principle of "*Divid et impera*." I am going to try and put together confederation of chiefs against Bashai by jealousy...<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Malam Yakubu Alhaji Yusuf at Andaha, 11 November 2003.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Arden-Clarke's letter to parents June 1922.

Arden-Clarke succeeded in his tactics and the village heads were unable to agree on who amongst them should become the District Head. Therefore, in the face of such disagreement, Bashayi seemed to be a compromise and he accordingly took over the administration of the district. But before Bashayi took over the district headship of the Eggon, he spent a month touring the villages that were placed under his jurisdiction with Arden-Clarke in order to familiarise himself with the village heads and elders.<sup>45</sup>

In 1924, Mr. Tomlinson, Clifford's Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs, made an official tour of central Nigeria, which resulted in the first attempt at a comprehensive report on "pagan administration" in northern Nigeria.<sup>46</sup> The report distinguished administrations under which decentralised societies had been placed and criticised the continued use of alien District Heads. In 1925, Clifford proposed to remove Jos Plateau from Bauchi province, bringing the region from mines up to Akwanga under one administration, which he expected would, "provide in a very real sense, a school of pagan administration functioning in the atmosphere undisturbed by the alien influence of the Emirates."<sup>47</sup> The opposition to Clifford's reforms in the Colonial Office, however, made his position in Nigeria unattainable. In 1925, there was a sharp change in the high command of Nigeria and Herbert Richmond Palmer took over as Governor from Clifford.

Palmer returned to the Lugardian path of administration. He carried out the re-organisation of the Northern Provinces and in 1926, abolished Nasarawa province and created Plateau province. Palmer also encouraged the study of "pagan" institutions. He had himself rebuilt Borno on the traditional Kanuri lines after investigations and, having adapted the Hausa-Fulani emirate model to Kanuri

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<sup>45</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province-Administration of, 1922.

<sup>46</sup> NAK SNP 7/11325: G.J.F. Tomlinson Report of, February 1924.

<sup>47</sup> NAK SNP 7/11996: Clifford to Secretary of State, January 1925.

institutions, he sought to extend this process to the decentralised societies.<sup>48</sup> His view of the administration of the decentralised societies was that it should be based on amalgamation, using any organisation that existed. Thus, Palmer created bigger tribal chiefs and began the rationalisation and legitimisation of imposed District Heads over some communities, notably in Jama'a and other lowland divisions of Plateau province.<sup>49</sup> The effect of Palmer's reform of the provincial and divisional boundaries, headquarters and names was to emphasise the hierarchical aspect of the emirate model at the expense of indigenous institutions. The territorial authority of chiefs and District Heads, whether alien or not, was reaffirmed and was extended over tribal authorities, which were incorporated into the territorial structure of the emirate Native Authorities. In Akwanga, the name of the division was changed to Southern Division, Mama district was incorporated into Wamba under a Muslim District Head and the names of the districts were also changed. North Mada and South Mada became Nunku and Wana respectively while Nungu became Wamba district.<sup>50</sup> The headquarters of the division was transferred from Akwanga to Wamba town. Thus, Akwanga was redesigned on the basis of territorial rather than tribal districts. But Palmer's application of indirect rule system in the "pagan" areas was reversed by events in southern Nigeria. The Warri tax riots of 1927 and Aba riots of December 1929 were seen as the result of a misapplication of the emirate indirect rule model, which led to the first serious investigation of traditional authority and boundaries.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the arrival of Donald Cameron in 1931 as the successor

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<sup>48</sup> Ballard, "Pagan Administration," p.9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208 Vol. II: Gazetteer of Plateau Province, 1930; NAK SNP17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

<sup>51</sup> H.A. Gailey, *The Road to Aba: A Study of British Administrative Policy in Eastern Nigeria* (London, 1970), pp.135-55.

of Palmer ended the whole application of the emirate model of indirect rule in the “pagan” areas of Nigeria.



**Figure 3.2:** The Native Administration central office, Wamba, built in 1930

Donald Cameron, a progressive colonial administrator who served as Clifford’s Chief Secretary, became the new Governor-General of Nigeria and his idea of indirect rule was again different to that of Lugard and Palmer. He arrived with a mandate to apply his experience in reforming native administration in Tanganyika. Cameron refuted what he considered to be “unhallowed policy insidiously introduced during the latter half of the last decade of thinking of the Moslem Emirates in terms of the Indian states.”<sup>52</sup> Indirect rule, according to him, was a system of local government that rested on the ability of colonial officers to identify and locate the origin of pre-colonial authorities within and amongst the Nigerian communities.<sup>53</sup> In order to identify the basis of the “traditional tribal authority,” he ordered research to be done into the nature and structure of the pre-

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<sup>52</sup> PRO CO 583/173: Cameron to Passfield, December 1931.

<sup>53</sup> D. Cameron, *The Principles of Native Administration and their Application* (Lagos, 1934), p.91.



colonial political organisations and institutions of all the communities in Nigeria. This was used as a basis for the new strategy. Cameron saw native administration in a tribal framework, and sought to replace the territorial basis of authority, which was implicit in the emirate model. Guidelines were given to colonial officials involved in conducting the enquiries. According to Cameron:

The proper way to search out that authority is from the bottom.

Build from the bottom; do not attempt, as I found in Nigeria when I returned in 1931, to make as it were, a crown or a king at the top and then try to find something underneath on which it might (perhaps) appropriately placed. Begin with the people in the lower course of the structure, the family first, the extended family, whatever it may be, that they all acknowledge as the authority that has regulated the society of the unit according to their own law and custom.<sup>54</sup>

The result of these enquiries became the basis for the reorganisation of the local administration that began under Cameron, which was rooted in pre-colonial sources of political authority and the Native Authority systems. The first group that began to receive attention in northern Nigeria were the Tiv, because the appointment of District Heads amongst them had created tension. This drew the attention of local colonial officers to the need for a more thorough investigation of Tiv society. As a result of these investigations, Tiv administration was rebuilt on the basis of three-tier councils, within a newly consolidated Tiv Division.<sup>55</sup> The impact of Cameron's

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<sup>54</sup> NAK Jos Prof 1512: Pagan Administration, Notes for the Guidance of Officers Engaged in Enquiries connected with, 1931.

<sup>55</sup> D.C. Dorward, "The Development of the British Colonial Administration Among the Tiv, 1900-1949," *African Affairs*, 68 (1969), p.60.

reform reached Akwanga in 1933, when he was able to appoint Mr. Browne as his Chief Commissioner. Browne was an experienced Resident in the “pagan” areas under Palmer and he had a longstanding disagreement with Palmer on his application of the indirect rule system amongst the decentralised societies. Cameron also appointed Arden-Clarke, who served in Akwanga in the 1920s, as his Chief Adviser on native administration. Armed with people of vast experience of the decentralised societies, Cameron began his changes of native administration in Nigeria. Thus, in line with his belief that political authority had to be sought from below, Cameron ordered intelligence reports to be made on each district, tribe and clan in all the “pagan” areas of Nigeria. Whereas the ethnographic surveys of the 1920s were aimed at discovering underlying unities among the decentralised groups, on the basis of which they might be organised from above under paramount chiefs, the intelligence reports were intended to provide organisation from below, on the basis of local acceptance and recognition of legitimate authority. In place of the uniform emirate model, Cameron’s instructions laid out four possible types of native administration: tribal chief, federation of chiefs, tribal council (with rotating chairman or a District Officer as chairman), and clan or village councils.<sup>56</sup> As a result, the N.A and divisional structure of Benue and Plateau provinces were substantially redesigned. The Eggon intelligence report, for example, apart from giving a detailed historical background of the people, recommended the formation of three federal units and the appointment of the councils of the several constituent clans as Native Authorities.<sup>57</sup> However, at the end of 1934, Cameron left Nigeria and by 1936, the revolution of “pagan” administration was ended. According to the Secretary of Northern Provinces:

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<sup>56</sup> Ballard, “Pagan Administration,” p.9.

<sup>57</sup> NAK SNP 17/23691: The Eggon Tribal Area, Summary of Intelligence Report on, 1935.

The basic reason of a re-organisation is to remedy discontent and mal-administration. If the people are content with their present form of government, then by all means leave them alone. There is no point in making changes in which appear to be theoretically correct though they are in fact not really needed.<sup>58</sup>

The doctrine of indirect rule system fashioned by Lugard, Clifford, Palmer and Cameron, except on the question of emphasis in the limit of the authority of the chiefs, agreed on the essential concept. In a series of instructions, they defined and redefined the basic principles of indirect rule (Lugard in his memoranda, Clifford in his minutes, and Cameron in his own memoranda). This, however, created a disjointed policy of native administration amongst the “tribal” societies and when Lord Hailey made a survey of native administration throughout Nigeria in 1940, he found a variety of systems in operation in the “pagan” areas of the north. In Kabba province, the native administration relied on nominal clan heads while Plateau province had a varied assortment of tribal councils, village group councils and chiefs-in-council.<sup>59</sup>

The application of indirect rule system as a theory and administrative practice throughout Nigeria was criticised by Lord Hailey. Indirect rule, he argued, “has not only its unresolved problems, but some noticeable points of weakness.”<sup>60</sup> He further argued that the system has passed through three stages, first of a useful administrative device, then that of a political doctrine, and finally that of religious

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<sup>58</sup> NAK SNP 6/29109: Secretary Northern Provinces to Chief Secretary, 28 May 1936.

<sup>59</sup> NAK SNP 17/29109: Secretary of Northern Provinces to Chief Secretary, 1940.

<sup>60</sup> Lord Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (Revised Edition: London, 1957), p.573.

dogma. According to him, "we must not act as if the system had come to us graven on tablets of brass."<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Crocker, a colonial officer in central Nigeria, argued that indirect rule became "a formula as hieratic and as dead of creative development as an outworn theology."<sup>62</sup> He stressed:

Indirect rule degenerated firstly into a systematic glorification of a number of able but unscrupulous careerists, secondly into the practice of preserving at all costs the status and power of the families of the hereditary Emirs and chiefs, and thirdly into an undue preoccupation with Islam and the Emirates to the neglect of the pagan peoples.<sup>63</sup>

Colonial Officers who failed to be "indirect" enough were often punished by not getting promotion; therefore, the system inhibited change and progress. Crocker, gave an example,

When Cadets and quite junior A.D.Os asked, how are you going to develop these Emirates, which you have turned into medieval monarchies, into modern states, or communities? Or how can most tribal societies by developing along their own lines grow into a society equal to modern life? Such men were quickly marked down as temperamentally unsuited for life in Nigeria. No more damning remark could be made in the annual secret report on an officer than that he was "direct" or not sufficiently imbued with the spirit of indirect rule.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> W.R. Crocker, *Nigeria: A Critique of British Colonial Administration* (London, 1936), p.215.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.217.

Other colonial officers like Kenneth Bradley compared indirect rule with the way public schools were managed.<sup>65</sup> The values inculcated in public schools, which includes leadership, firmness and fairness were qualities according to him, needed in dealing with the “natives.” However, as John Hobson has observed, the values of the public school encouraged “imperialism masquerading as patriotism, militarism, chauvinism, arrogance and over-weening self-confidence.”<sup>66</sup>

Generally, the introduction of the Native Authority system in Akwanga based on the principle of indirect rule transformed the political landscape of the region. The major change was the creation of the offices of District Heads, who subsequently became chiefs in their respective Districts. Thus, the pre-colonial authority of the elders began to wane and the new British appointed District Heads were given powers and status that had no traditional basis. For example, the colonial government through legislation enhanced their authority over the Native Authorities. The Native Law Number 43 of 1933 gave the ‘Sole Native Authorities’ statutory power to overrule their advisory councils and therefore the Native Administration provided the District Heads with the political means of exercising authority at the local level.<sup>67</sup> After the Second World War, there was an unexpected development among the decentralised groups in central Nigeria as the appointed District Heads requested the creation of paramount chiefs in the region. Since there was no traditional basis for such chieftaincies, these demands were initially discouraged, but after consistent pressure by the various Native Authorities, the chiefly offices were eventually sanctioned in 1946-47. The demand for chiefs in central Nigeria, according to

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<sup>65</sup> K. Bradley, *Once a District Officer* (London, 1966), p.15.

<sup>66</sup> J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (Third Edition: London, 1988), p.43.

<sup>67</sup> PRO CO 847/25/47234: Memorandum on Factors Affecting Native Administration Policy (no date).

Ballard, was based on the desire, "to provide a broker between the council and the provincial administration, and in each case the first chiefs were primarily for their education and administrative competence."<sup>68</sup> There was also the desire to obtain political status and recognition for the local chiefs through membership of the Northern House of Chiefs, which was a powerful and influential body in the Northern Region of Nigeria. Thus, the demand was to transform the District Heads into paramount chiefs like those of the emirates. In Akwanga, the demand was to transform the three District Heads of the division into chiefs of the three major tribes: Eggon, Mada and Rindre. When the colonial government sanctioned these demands, the District Head of Wana became *Aren* Eggon (chief of Eggon); the District Head of Nunku became *Chun* Mada (chief of Mada) and the District Head of Wamba became *Oriye* Rindre (chief of Rindre).<sup>69</sup> Thus, the office of District Head that the British created in Akwanga became indigenised and it is to the present day looked upon as a symbol of political identity and unity amongst the local people.

## ORGANS OF THE NATIVE ADMINISTRATION

The treasury was an integral part of the Native Administration. Public funds for northern Nigeria came partly out of the Governor's central budget and partly out of the native treasury for each province. In Akwanga, the four districts had a combined treasury in Wamba, the divisional headquarters. The treasury was supposed to be at the disposal of the District Heads, but the extent of their control of it was strictly supervised and audited by a colonial officer. The first native treasuries to be established in northern Nigeria were those of Kano and Katsina in 1910. The need for the establishment of the treasuries arose from the early experience of the

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<sup>68</sup> Ballard, "Pagan Administration," p.14.

<sup>69</sup> Interview at Wamba with Alhaji Yusuf Waju, 15 April 2004.

colonial government regarding the share of tax given to the Native Administrations. The establishment of native treasuries was approved by Sir Hesketh Bell, (the then Governor of northern Nigeria). This scheme was extended to Nasarawa province in 1911 and by 1914 most of the provinces and divisions had established their native treasuries.<sup>70</sup> As already mentioned, the native treasury in Akwanga was established in 1914 and the District Officer proceeded to recruit a treasurer or *ma'aji*, the first being a Hausa man from Zaria.<sup>71</sup> All the revenues due to the government were collected and paid into the treasury and were kept in the strong room, which had three keys and were held by the *ma'aji* and the District Officer.<sup>72</sup> Lugard's Political Memorandum Number 9 has outlined the spending limits of the native treasury. For example, a first class chief was authorised to spend up to £1,000 annually in non-recurrent expenditure, while a third class chief was allowed only £100.<sup>73</sup> Any surplus from the treasury was to be handed over to the Governor for "works of public utility" to prevent chiefs from misappropriating the funds on projects that were unimportant.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, part of the revenue generated was used to pay the salaries of the Native Administration employees and part was for education and public works. Akwanga had difficulty in producing a surplus and also did not have any taxable resources to generate revenue for the treasury. The little resources the treasury did have were spent on a long list of personal emoluments paid out to the Native Administration staff. For instance, between 1928 and 1929, the District Heads had large salaries of £120 per annum whilst the scribes received salaries of £36.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> NAK SNP 7/2193: Nasarawa Province, Summary of Events in, 1911; NAK SNP 10/11p/1913: Beit-al-Mal, Revenue and Expenditure, 1912.

<sup>71</sup> NAK Jos Prof 248/1920: Southern Division Report for the Year 1914; Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.44.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Malam Yakubu Alhaji Yusuf at Andaha, 11 November 2003.

<sup>73</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, pp.333-335.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Akwanga Division Report for the Year 1928.

The District Officer was alarmed by the rate at which the treasury resources were being drained and reported, "I fear the rather swollen salary list is a relic of what may be termed the Nasarawa regime."<sup>76</sup> Salaries accounted for approximately 84 per cent of the total expenditure of the native treasury, which meant that there was not much money left for public works and development.<sup>77</sup> The head of the treasury had an assistant, whose duties included the preparation of vouchers, keeping of all prison books and Native Administration store books and the counting of revenue brought into the treasury.<sup>78</sup> The accounts of the treasury were prepared and kept by the *ma'aji* in the cashbook, daily abstract, tax account and service ledger.<sup>79</sup> These accounts were checked monthly by a political officer and also subject to periodical surprise checks of both accounts and cash balances.

The native treasury also had a reserve fund, which was a necessary back-up for unforeseen contingencies. However, most of the funds were actually used in assisting Britain in times of crisis. For example, following the outbreak of the First World War, the Native Authorities in northern Nigeria contributed £53,041 in 1916 and £50,905 in 1919.<sup>80</sup> At the end of 1915, the reserve funds of northern Nigeria totalled £121,449.2d, of which £56,445.10s.11d was invested in various stocks abroad and £65,003.10s.3d was deposited with the Nigerian government.<sup>81</sup> This shows that the surpluses generated by the NAs were not used for their development, but rather for the interests of the colonising power. The colonial government was in control of the native treasuries as they determined the expenditure of the NAs. Once

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Malam Yakubu Alhaji Yusuf at Andaha, 11 November 2003.

<sup>79</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, pp.44-46.

<sup>80</sup> NAK SNP8 140/1915: Lugard to Colonial Office, 1916; NAK SNP8 11/1919: Annual War Contributions by Native Administration, 1920.

<sup>81</sup> O. Ikime, "The British and Native Administration Finance in Northern Nigeria 1900-1934," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 7 (1975), pp.679-680.



a British political officer had helped the NAs to draw up their estimates, they were expected to stick by it and had no powers to exceed the limit approved. Therefore, the native treasury fitted into the British system of indirect rule system because by enabling political officers to control the finances of the NAs, it ensured a degree of subordination. Unlike the northern emirates, the chiefs in Akwanga had no access to the treasury at Wamba because they were considered not be “sufficiently responsible.”<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the treasury was in direct control of the District Officer.

Another important institution that helped in the sustenance of colonial rule in Akwanga was the Native Authority court. The courts had no jurisdiction to try “non-natives” and only British courts dealt with offences against public order.<sup>83</sup> The native courts generally entertained civil cases arising from marriage relations, debts and inheritance. As a rule, the native courts had no powers to try soldiers and the police for criminal offences.<sup>84</sup> The court proceedings in the native courts were brief and, in matrimonial and debt cases, it was only the names of the parties, the decision made and the fees that were entered into the record books.<sup>85</sup> The organisation of the courts in Akwanga in the 1930s was as follows:

District	Grade	Members	Others
Wana	C	District Head (President), Village Heads of Alogani, Galle, Wulko, Wakama, Wangibi and Ungwaseru.	1 Scribe, 1 Messenger and 1 Yandoka
Nunku	C	District Head (President), Village Heads of Nunku, Ancho Babba, Niddan, Ungwa Durumi, Muchu, Nunkuchu.	Maichibi, Yandoka and a Scribe shared with Wamba.
Wamba	C	District Head (President) assisted by his brother who was also the Scribe of the court.	1 Scribe shared with Nunku, 1 Messenger and Yandoka.
Mama	D	Village Head of Kwarra (President),	1 Scribe, 1

<sup>82</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, pp.48-49.

<sup>83</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, p.277.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> This is evident in most of the files of court cases at the National Archive, Kaduna

		Village Heads of Mama, Jimiya, Marhai and Arum.	Messenger and Yandoka.
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**Table 3.1:** Native Authority Courts in Akwanga in the 1930s.

**Source:** NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32

The Wana court sat every Friday of the week, while that of Nunku sat every Saturday of the week. The court scribe of Nunku was shared with Wamba. He remained in Nunku during the period of tax collection.<sup>86</sup> The court at Mama was established at the end of 1926 and all the Village Heads were represented except the Village Head of Yashim.<sup>87</sup>

The native courts had jurisdiction to entertain both civil and criminal cases in their respective districts. The following table shows the number of cases that were heard in the native courts of the four districts between 1926 and 1931:

	Wana		Nunku		Wamba		Mama	
	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal	Civil	Criminal
1926	46	179	20	73	39	95	37	45
1927	23	174	12	68	32	69	84	83
1928	45	120	99	95	32	74	109	115
1929	56	139	76	78	68	117	61	108
1930	105	109	40	94	183	181	44	64
1931	122	106	55	86	107	131	57	74

**Table 3.2:** Number of cases heard in the native courts between 1926 and 1931

**Source:** NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32

This table shows that the majority of cases tried between 1926 and 1931 were criminal matters. People generally preferred to settle civil cases out of court because they had little faith in the NA courts, which were smeared with corruption.<sup>88</sup> The District Heads and village heads, being the presidents and members of the native courts respectively, were corrupt in carrying out their administrative and judicial

<sup>86</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>87</sup> NAK Jos Prof 31/1928: Akwanga Division Annual Report 1927.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Malam Audu Usman at Akwanga, 10 March 2003; Interview with Dauda Madaki at Abu, 26 November 2003.

functions. Since the appointment of the village heads depended on the approval of the District Heads, they often worked in concert with each other and were accused of receiving bribes from litigants, giving warrants for arrests and issuing illegal court orders. For example, the village head of Wulko was accused of being irregular in his court attendance and entertaining cases from his house.<sup>89</sup> He was accused of receiving bribes from litigants and in a particular case, he granted a divorce to a woman to enable his son marry her without following the due process of the law.<sup>90</sup> The District Officer had to intervene by revoking the divorce order.

Village heads were also notorious for defying anything that threatened their position or interests. For example, Anja, the village head of Raga was convicted in 1927 for resisting the authority of the native court and was sentenced to three months imprisonment.<sup>91</sup> After serving his prison sentence, Anja left Raga and settled at Sanga in Jama'a division.<sup>92</sup> The members of the native courts did not only receive bribes, but they also stole from the court. For example, in June 1942, Yamusa, the chief of Mada stole money from the native court. A man named Guni was accused of making a woman's husband impotent through witchcraft and was fined £3, which was not entered in the court's register.<sup>93</sup>

However, the Native Authority Courts, when they were used, had the power to sanction punishments for offenders in accordance with the provisions of the law. The choices they had were imprisonment, fines or flogging; all of which were dependant on the nature of offence committed. The table below shows the punishments that were handed out by the courts between 1926 and 1930:

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<sup>89</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>90</sup> Namo et al, group interview at Wulko; NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>91</sup> NAK Jos Prof 31/1928: Akwanga Division Annual Report, 1927.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Dauda Madaki at Abu, 26 November 2003.

<sup>93</sup> NAK Jos PROF 5422: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1943; NAK Jos Prof 5061: Nunku District Administration, 1942.

	Wana			Nunku			Wamba			Mama		
	Imp	Fine	Flog	Imp	Fine	Flog	Imp	Fine	Flog	Imp	Fine	Flog
1926	30	99	30	9	36	4	5	44	14	1	5	3
1927	55	110	47	37	80	8	8	75	8	7	52	24
1928	46	53	81	21	98	59	9	66	18	14	55	60
1929	59	43	174	15	57	28	14	72	34	5	64	68
1930	53	31	136	18	58	81	39	89	93	6	61	39

**Table 3.3:** Punishment handed out by the Native Courts between 1926 and 1930

**Source:** NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32

The courts generally preferred to hand out forms of punishment (fines and flogging) other than imprisonment. This could possibly be explained in two ways. Firstly, by the small size of the NA prison, which allowed only a maximum of 60 prisoners. The figures above show that the highest number of offenders sentenced to imprisonment was 59 in 1929. Secondly, the native court, being an arm of the colonial government, was more interested in handing out fines in order to raise revenue, which the NA desperately needed. The statistics for Nunku district between 1926 and 1929 for example shows that the number of fines handed out were far more than other punishments. Flogging was sometimes preferred to imprisonment in order to cut down running costs. However, fines were the best option for the NAs because imprisonment attracted other expenses (i.e. feeding, clothing and guarding the prisoners), a cost which the colonial government was desperate to avoid. Following the amalgamation of Wamba and Mama districts in 1933, the court at Mama was reorganised. The Grade 'D' court at Kwarra that had jurisdiction over the whole of Mama district was scrapped and replaced with four new Grade 'D' courts instituted at Kwarra, Arum, Mangar and Jimiya.<sup>94</sup> The Grade 'C' court at Wamba acted as an appeal court and any crime that potentially deserved more than two months imprisonment was tried at Wamba.

<sup>94</sup> NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Southern Division, Report on for 1933.

There was also the *alkali's* (judge's) court that was responsible for the settlement of disputes between the immigrant groups in the division. The court was revived on 15 October 1926 and given 'C' grade powers with a new *alkali* (judge) brought from Bauchi.<sup>95</sup> The court was located at Akwanga and had jurisdiction over the whole division despite the fact that the native courts were independent of each other. Although the colonial administration considered it convenient for an *alkali* to be available to settle cases concerning Muslims and other immigrants, the wisdom behind the practice and its existence in an "entirely pagan area" was questioned.<sup>96</sup> The *alkali's* court was eventually discontinued however, as the native courts were given jurisdiction to try cases involving all "Africans" in their districts.<sup>97</sup>

Another integral part of the NA were the *yandoka* or law enforcement agents, who were responsible for the maintenance of law and order in all the districts of Akwanga. Their other duties included making civil arrests, accompanying District Heads on tours for tax assessment and collection, providing escorts for prisoners or money and maintaining law and order at mining camps and at railway stations.<sup>98</sup> The *yandoka* evolved from the *dogarai* (body guards) who were hitherto personal guards to the emirs before the advent of the British rule in northern Nigeria. However, the services of most of the *dogarai* ended in 1928 (with the exception of Kano) when colonial officials began to investigate the better organisation, training and discipline of the police force.<sup>99</sup> Therefore, the *yandoka* came to replace the *dogarai* as the NA police with the aim of having a better police force to assist in the maintenance of colonial law and order. Before the establishment of the police training college at

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<sup>95</sup> NAK Jos Prof 58/1927: Akwanga Division Report on for the Year 1926.

<sup>96</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Akwanga Division Report for 1928.

<sup>97</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province 1918-33.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Sergeant Buba (retired), at Andaha, 12 March 2004. He was the head of the police in charge of Nunku district.

<sup>99</sup> T.N. Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria: Origins, Development and Role, 1861-1965* (Ibadan, 1970), p.93.

Kaduna in 1929, there was no systematic training programme of the *yandoka* in northern Nigeria. The Inspector-General of police in 1928 prescribed a course of “simple preliminary training” at the provincial headquarters for NA police detachment.<sup>100</sup> In Akwanga, the *yandoka* were sent in batches of three to the provincial headquarters at Jos to attend training sessions which lasted for three months.<sup>101</sup> Most of the *yandoka* were uneducated and therefore found their training difficult. Although the medium of instruction at the training centre at Jos was Hausa, some of the recruits neither spoke nor understood the language, which made it problematic.<sup>102</sup> For example, one of them returned from the course with the comment ‘useless’ from the police superintendent.<sup>103</sup>



**Figure 3.3:** The Yandoka Barracks at Andaha, built in the 1930s

The *yandoka* were stationed in each district, with the *sarkin yandoka* (head of the NA police) in Wamba, the divisional headquarters. In 1932, there were 27 *yandoka*, a number which had increased to 29 by 1942.<sup>104</sup> Before the 1940s, the working conditions of NA police service were not good enough to attract a large number of literate people. The salary structure was relatively low and the

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, pp.100-101.

<sup>101</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4825: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report 1942.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Sergeant Buba (retired) at Andaha 12 March 2004.

<sup>103</sup> NAK Jos Prof 6004: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report 1944.

<sup>104</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division, Report on for 1931-32.

accommodation in barracks was inadequate. In appearance, the new NA police were distinguished from those who continued in the personal services of the chiefs as *dogarai* by the uniform they wore. The NA police uniform consisted of black shorts; short sleeved shirts, red belts, shoes and long stockings while those of the *dogarai* were big gowns with red and blue stripes, and a turban.<sup>105</sup> The colonial government through ordinances gave the chiefs power to hire the NA police for the maintenance of law and order in their respective domains.<sup>106</sup> This meant that those that were employed became loyal to the chiefs and not the people they were serving. Therefore, they became an extension of the chief's *dogarai* in suppressing any opposition to his authority.

The NA prison was another important institution of colonial rule in Akwanga. There was no government prison in the division and therefore those convicted in the provincial and magistrate courts were sent to Kaduna or Jos for imprisonment, according to the length of their sentences.



**Figure 3.4:** The Native Administration Prison at Wamba, built in 1930

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Hassan Usman at Akwanga, 14 March 2004.

<sup>106</sup> P.T. Ahire, *Imperial Policing: The Emergence and Role of the Police in Colonial Nigeria 1860-1960* (Milton Keynes, 1991), p.46.

The NA prison was originally in Akwanga town, but following the transfer of the divisional headquarters to Wamba in 1930 the prison was also moved there. Serving prisoners were involved in the construction of the new prison and assisted in the building of the Native Administration offices in order to save labour costs. The accommodation in the new prison at Wamba was calculated by the regulation amount of cubic space for sixty prisoners.<sup>107</sup> Prison staff consisted of one chief warder (*sarkin yari*) a fluctuating number of warders and, when the need arose, a wardress, to look after female prisoners. The NA prison maintained a farm, which grew food required for the prisoners, who were also employed on the prison's ginger and groundnut farms.<sup>108</sup> Duties performed by prisoners consisted mainly of tending prison farms, repairing Native Administration buildings, clearance work in the town and station and the performance of sanitary labour.<sup>109</sup> The prisoners were also, from time to time, detailed to assist the dispensary attendants in providing fuel and boiling water as required and in keeping the dispensary clean.<sup>110</sup> They used local cloths and blankets (*gwado*), material for which was brought from Keffi, while the local cloth was made at Wana.<sup>111</sup> The prisoners were fed at the expense of the colonial government and were regularly inspected by a Medical Officer. It was estimated in 1933 that the NA prison cost about £330 a year to "guard, feed and maintain."<sup>112</sup>

<sup>107</sup> NAK Jos Prof 3418: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1939.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Interview with the late Musa Gun at Wamba, 22 May 2002.

<sup>110</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2964: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1938.

<sup>111</sup> NAK Jos Prof 3875: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1940.

<sup>112</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208/1918: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1933.





**Figure 3.5:** Prison quarters, Wamba, built in 1930

During the 1940s, the prison building outlived its usefulness and the Resident of Plateau province commented, “whatever may have been its merits in the past, it has now outlived them. A good permanent type building is overdue and should be done...”<sup>113</sup> Although there have been some alterations to the original structure of the prison, the 1930s colonial prison still, to this day, serves as the only government prison in the area.

## CONCLUSION

The colonial conquest of Akwanga was a clear indication of the consolidation of British rule in the area. This is not to suggest that the local people did not resist the political changes that were brought by the colonising power. The difficulty in applying the principle of native administration based on the system of indirect rule resulted in a series of modifications to the system to fit in with local customs and

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<sup>113</sup> NAK Jos Prof 6004: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report 1944.

traditions. As a result, the new office of District Head that was created had adverse consequences for the peoples of Akwanga. The pre-colonial gerontocratic system was replaced by these British appointed 'chiefs', leading to a decline in the authority of the elders. The peoples of Akwanga however, took the initiative to demand the creation of paramount chiefs in their localities. When the transformation of the District Heads into chiefs was eventually sanctioned in 1946, the chieftaincy stool became indigenised in the process of the colonial experience. The institutions of *Chun Mada* and *Aren Eggon* are still looked upon as symbols of ethnic identity and unity to the present day.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **TAXATION AND CASH CROP PRODUCTION, 1908-1945**

This chapter looks at the impact of taxation and cash crop production on the peoples of Akwanga. The colonial conquest of the region was carried out simultaneously with the imposition of taxes. This was seen as a token of submission by the conquered people and the revenue generated was used in financing the administrative structures that were being created. The colonial conquest of Akwanga was followed by the imposition of direct taxation in 1908. The peoples in the area were not used to paying taxes and therefore when it was first introduced, resisted its payment. Before the introduction of an acceptable currency, taxes were paid in kind from 1908 to 1921. After 1922, the new colonial currency became widespread and people began to pay their tax in cash.

The imposition of taxation and the pressure mounted by law enforcement agents meant that people had to engage in cash crop production in order to meet their tax obligations. Communities were encouraged to produce export crops in order to boost their income for tax purposes. The colonial government at various stages encouraged the production of ginger and groundnuts, which the farmers reluctantly integrated into their agricultural system. However, the peoples of Akwanga did not earn their income from export crop production, but by exporting foodstuffs to the mining camps in Jos and Wamba. The tin mining industry provided readily available market for the surplus food

crops produced in the division and the development of the mining sector was directly linked to the cash crop production in Akwanga.

## COLONIAL TAXATION

After the colonial conquest of Sokoto and Kano in 1903, the British government gave an Imperial Grant-in-aid of £405,000 for the 1903/1904 financial year in order to fund the colonial administration in northern Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> The financial subsidy was scaled down after the amalgamation of northern Nigeria with the south in 1914. British economic policy, like that of other European powers in Africa, encouraged its colonies to be financially self-supporting. In other words, local people had to pay for their own conquest, exploitation and administration. Hence, the revenue for the establishment and sustenance of colonial structures had to be generated internally. The difficulty was that northern Nigeria was neither producing surplus nor did it have any taxable resources. As observed by Cain and Hopkins, “the fundamental and persistent difficulty faced by colonial officials in tropical Africa was how to generate taxable resources in territories which were generally poor and rarely came with a ready made tax base.”<sup>2</sup> The success of the colonial administration depended on much needed revenue and as Lugard made it clear, “no system can be effective unless it enjoys some measure of financial independence.”<sup>3</sup>

The Provincial Residents that were appointed by Lugard to administer the newly acquired territories of northern Nigeria were in the forefront of the support for the

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<sup>1</sup> C.W.J. Orr, *The Making of Northern Nigeria* (London, 1911), p.150.

<sup>2</sup> P. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914-1990* (London, 1993), pp.204-205.

<sup>3</sup> Lugard, *Dual Mandate*, p.230.

imposition of taxes on the local people. Mr Temple, Resident of Kano, commented that the “authority of native over native and all recognition of authority by natives was based on collection and payment of some kind of material tribute, i.e., rent, taxes, presents.”<sup>4</sup> Amongst the “tribal” peoples of Nasarawa province, the payment of tax or tribute was considered to be an “outward and visible token of submission.”<sup>5</sup> The imposition of direct taxation was therefore to demonstrate the transfer of sovereignty from the colonised peoples to their colonisers. Direct taxation was enforced as the basis of the whole revenue system in northern Nigeria. In 1904, Lugard enacted a Land Revenue Proclamation which gave the government rights to a certain proportion of the tribute paid by the agricultural and pastoral population in respect of their land and produce.<sup>6</sup> Lugard accepted direct taxation as an essential feature of the new native administration. His political memorandum Number 5, on taxation, emphasised that direct taxation was preferable to tariffs. Lugard’s insistence on direct taxation was based on the following: that direct taxes were “contributions towards the cost of administration, which are recognised among all civilised nations as justly due from the individual;” that taxation was “a moral benefit to the people by stimulating industry and production;” that the “result (the government) aims at is to emancipate the people from indolence on the one hand and forced services on the other and to raise them to a plane of greater communal and individual responsibility.”<sup>7</sup> Direct taxation was also aimed at providing income for the ruling classes, which according to Lugard lost their sources of revenue with the abolition of slavery and slave raids. He argued that the rulers were “provided with

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<sup>4</sup> NAK SNP7/10 No 3635: Kano Provincial Report for half year ended 30 June 1909.

<sup>5</sup> NAK SNP 9/2946/1924: Nasarawa Province, Unsettled Districts, 1923.

<sup>6</sup> *Colonial Report No. 476: Taxation in Northern Nigeria, Journal of the African Society* xvii (1905), p.312. (No author).

<sup>7</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, pp.166-69.

legitimate incomes, and all other forms of exaction from peasantry can be declared illegal and suppressed.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, direct taxation according to Lugard was aimed at providing paid salaries for public work and also income for the ruling classes without reducing them to poverty.<sup>9</sup> Another benefit of direct taxation according to Lugard was to promote an intimate relationship between the British staff and the colonised peoples. He maintained that the District Officer must be on tour and at each village he “should simultaneously involve the settlement of ancient disputes, the administration of justice [and] the collection of valuable statistics.”<sup>10</sup> However, as Gorer observed, “what is the object of tours, sometimes accompanied by bloodshed? To bring in taxes...what is the object of ethnographical studies? To learn how to govern more subtly so that taxes shall come in better.”<sup>11</sup>

Lugard’s preference for direct taxation was based on his inability to raise money from indirect sources. He could not raise money through custom duties since the export and import trade of the region passed through ports in the south which had their own separate administration. At the initial stage of British administration, Lugard attempted to impose taxes on goods as they crossed the northern frontier from the southern region. This became unsatisfactory and after some negotiations by the two governments, Southern Protectorate agreed to pay a certain proportion of its customs revenue to northern Nigeria.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.167.

<sup>9</sup> Lugard, *Dual Mandate*, p.233.

<sup>10</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, pp.168-69.

<sup>11</sup> G. Gorer, *Africa Dances: A Book about West African Negroes* (London, 1935), p.92.

<sup>12</sup> A. McPhee, *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa* (London, 1926), p.219.

The system of direct taxation was already in operation in the emirates of northern Nigeria and therefore the principle was not a new one.<sup>13</sup> Lugard consolidated the pre-existing multiplicity of taxes into general tax (*haraji*) and cattle tax (*jangali*). General tax represented the variety of levies made on settled agriculturists and traders while the cattle tax was imposed on the nomadic pastoralists. The cattle tax was 1/6 per head of cattle, and (when the sheep and goats were not included in the wealth assessed for the general tax) 6d per head of sheep and 3d per head of goats.<sup>14</sup> The introduction of *haraji* and *jangali* was aimed at reducing the number of collectors in order to make its collection more effective and efficient.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in 1910, an attempt was made under the Land and Native Rights Proclamation to introduce a general system of seven years leaseholds and to secure for the government the whole of the economic rent. However, the attempt at the nationalisation of all the lands in the region was abandoned.

The major difficulty that Lugard had to overcome in order to raise revenue necessary for the functioning of the native administration was the transition from the payments of taxes in kind to cash. Before British control, taxes (where they existed) were paid in grain, livestock, cloth, salt and cowries. With the establishment of British rule, the colonial government had to make the best use of these items until a coin currency could be introduced and be within the reach of all who had to pay taxes. From 1904 to 1908, the colonial government was ready to accept certain items as payment for taxes. The items, according to Lugard, should "easily be convertible into cash, such as cotton, livestock, products which could be sold for export, or possibly food which could

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<sup>13</sup> In Southern Nigeria, there was no system of direct taxation before 1914 except in Benin where it was imposed after its conquest in 1897.

<sup>14</sup> *Colonial Report No. 476: Taxation in Northern Nigeria*

<sup>15</sup> OIT, *Northern Nigeria*, p.162.

be issued as rations to soldiers or police.”<sup>16</sup> The disposal of the taxes paid in kind was difficult, however. According to Hall:

The cattle, sheep and goats were at night exchanged by the wily until what had been herds of good quality were turned into the herds of wasters. The cloth taken in payment (locally made cotton goods) immediately attracted the attention of white ants, and the corn had to be buried in the ground (and) when dug up was found to be mildewed.<sup>17</sup>

The colonial administration was faced with the problem of introducing a new currency system that could be utilised in the region. In 1904, the government declared the coinage of the United Kingdom to be legal tender in northern Nigeria. The circulation of British currency in Akwanga began to be widespread in the 1920s and the first groups of people to receive wages for their services were the District Heads, the Native Authority scribes, and *yandoka*. They became groups of salary earners after the consolidation of colonial rule and the subsequent establishment of the native administration in the area. The emergence of income earners into the colonial society of Akwanga also accelerated the process of cash circulation into the economy. For example, in 1933, it was estimated that the mining companies working in the division paid about £12,000 a year into the local economy, the Native Administration about £3,500 and the colonial government £3000; a total of £18,500 a year.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, p.209.

<sup>17</sup> H.C. Hall, *Barracks and Bush* (London, 1924), pp.108-9.

<sup>18</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1933.



As already mentioned, the system of taxation existed in the emirates, but amongst the majority of the “stateless” groups in central Nigeria, there was no pre-existing tax system before the coming of the British. Communities in the area had a minimal amount of tax imposed on them as an acknowledgement of British suzerainty. This tax, according to Orr, initially was of a political, moral and social nature rather than of financial character.<sup>19</sup> He maintained that such taxes brought in little or nothing beyond the expenses of collection and of punishing infringements. In Akwanga, the beginning of colonial subjugation was accompanied by the imposition of taxes. In 1908, a tax of £94.0s.6d was imposed on the Eggon people after their encounter with the British. By 1911, a Resident was appointed for the whole division and was charged with the responsibility of assessing and collecting taxes. Tax assessments were carried out in various forms. At the beginning of British rule, it took the form of small sums collected as tokens of submission and later it became a capitation tax based on population counts which were carried out by an administrative staff.<sup>20</sup> Eventually assessments were made based on the wealth of each village and an amount of tax was fixed in proportion to it. Household income was assessed by giving a market value to estimated production as if such households operated in a market economy. In 1922, Arden-Clarke wrote: “I estimate the gross annual income of one average adult Mada [Eggon], whether male or female, as £4. Thus one [man] and his wife earn £8 per annum and pay a tax of 3/- or 19 % of their annual income.”<sup>21</sup> In assessing an individual’s income, for example amongst the Mada in 1922, the colonial officials carefully measured farmland with tape measures

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<sup>19</sup> Orr, *Northern Nigeria*, p.166.

<sup>20</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.42.

<sup>21</sup> NAK SNP 617/1922: Reassessment Report, Central Mada, 1922.

improvised out of ropes.<sup>22</sup> The assessing officers took into account the amount of land under cultivation, crops like *dawa* (guinea corn), and livestock as a basis for assessing an individual's income. A detailed example of tax assessment of some Mada villages is shown below:

a) Maiashi of Andaha - 4 males, 5 females - tax to be paid - 13/-

Dawa - 34 acres	£51.0.0
Acha - 14.1 acres	£28.4.0
1 garden	<u>£ 2.0.0</u>
Gross annual income	£81.4.0

b) Mainja of Anjagwa - 5 males, 4 females - tax to be paid - 14/-

Dawa - 26 acres	£39.00.0
Acha - 10.3 acres	£20.12.0
Ridi - 2.9 acres	£ 4.07.0
2 gardens	£ 4.00.0
16 palm trees	£ 3.12.0
6 goats	<u>£ 1.10.0</u>
Gross annual income	£73.01.0

c) Magaji of Bampam - 2 males, 2 females - tax to be paid - 6/-

Dawa - 8.2 acres	£12.06.0
Acha - 3.6 acres	£ 7.04.0
Yams	£ 1.05.0
2 gardens	£ 4.00.0
7 palm trees	£ 1.11.0
3 sheep, 5 goats	<u>£ 2.00.0</u>
Gross annual income	£28.06.6

d) Kwanta of Andaha - 4 males, 2 females - tax to be paid - 12/-

Dawa - 18.7 acres	£28.01.0
Acha - 6.2 acres	£12.08.0
1 Garden	<u>£ 2.00.0</u>
Gross annual income	£42.09.0

e) Zantok of Nunku - 3 males, 2 females - tax to be paid - 8/-

Dawa - 7.3 acres	£10.19.0
Acha - 3.6 acres	£ 8.12.0
Garden	£ 2.00.0
10 palm trees	£ 2.05.0
4 sheep	<u>£ 1.00.0</u>

<sup>22</sup> NAK SNP17-K5922: North Mada District, Akwanga Division Reassessment, 1922.

Gross annual income £24.16.0

f) Sama of Boher - 2 males, 1 female - tax to be paid - 5/-

Dawa - 3.4 acres	£ 5.02.0
Acha - 3.6 acres	£ 7.04.0
Garden	£ 2.00.0
2 palm trees	£ 0.09.0
2 goats	£ 0.10.0
Gross annual income	£15.05.0

g) Sarkin Samari of Nunku - 1 male, 1 female - tax to be paid - 3/-

Dawa - 2 acres	£ 3.00.0
Acha - 2.1 acres	£ 4.00.0
1 Garden	£ 2.00.0
2 sheep, 1 goat	£ 0.15.0
Gross annual income	£ 9.19.0

h) Gumbo of Ningo - 4 males, 3 females - tax to be paid - 11/-

Dawa - 6.7 acres	£10.01.0
Acha - 1.3 acres	£ 2.12.0
2 gardens	£ 4.00.0
3 sheep	£ 0.15.0
Gross annual income	£17.08.0

i) Ienke of Ancho Babba - 2 males, 2 females - tax to be paid - 6/-

Dawa - 2.9 acres	£ 4.07.0
Acha - 3.5 acres	£ 7.00.0
1 Garden	£ 2.00.0
6 palm trees	£ 1.07.0
1 sheep	£ 0.05.0
Gross annual income	£14.19.0

j) Irwa of Lalle - 1 male, 1 female - tax to be paid - 3/-

Dawa - 1.3 acres	£ 1.19.0
1 Garden	£ 2.00.0
2 palm trees	£ 0.09.0
Gross annual income	£ 4.08.0

Source: NAK SNP17-K5922: North Mada District, Akwanga Division Reassessment, 1922.

Examples a, b and c above were wealthy families, d, e, f and g represented four families with an average income and the last three, h, i and j, were poor families. The number of males in the family, the name of the family head and his village and the

amount of tax to be paid were also given. This clearly shows how detailed the tax assessments were when they were carried out by the colonial officials in the districts of the division.

Most of the taxes collected in Akwanga before the 1920s were in kind. This was because the new British currency was not in wide circulation and wage labour only began to be widespread in the 1920s. Before the introduction of British currency, the tokens of submission collected by the colonial administration were in grain, livestock and other valuable items. The commodification of labour had great consequences on the pre-colonial labour arrangements as migrant labour became intensified during the colonial period. The migrant labourers were from areas unaffected by the new colonial economic developments or alternatively were in search of a cash income to pay their taxes. There was the intensification of movement to Wamba - the administrative and economic centre of the division – and the surrounding villages. In other words, the development and expansion of Wamba town and its environs were associated with the presence of the mining industry and the opportunities offered by the mining companies and the Native Administration. The mining camps attracted people who came from different places to earn money by working as labourers. People from the northern and southern districts of Akwanga were mostly seasonal migrants, who returned to their places of origin after achieving their set targets. The migrants that settled permanently were from outside the division and as a result, new settlements were founded while old ones expanded rapidly. The new settlements that were established through colonial mining included Barikin Mai Gajeren Wando, Gongon, and Rafin Tabo.<sup>23</sup> Other villages expanded as a result of mining, such as Ninkada, Marmara, Barkin Teacher, Barkin

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<sup>23</sup> Interview at Akwanga with Mr. Shammah, 13 February 2004.

Waja and Kango Lawson. Another town that expanded as a result of labour migration was Gudi. The development and subsequent expansion of Gudi was a direct result of the railway construction that passed through the area in the 1920s. The Hausa people that first came to Gudi were labourers employed in the railway construction who decided to settle down after their jobs ended.<sup>24</sup> They became involved in trade and farming. This negates the claim by some of the Hausa people that they founded Gudi long before the Eastern railway construction began.<sup>25</sup> Besides the Hausa labourers that came in the 1920s, there were also Igbo, Tiv and Yoruba, which made the population of Gudi cosmopolitan.<sup>26</sup> The cosmopolitan nature of the settlement was demonstrated in the grade D native court that was established in the area in 1942. It was a mixed court comprised of Patrick Okoli (Igbo representative), E.O. Komodi (Yoruba) and *malam* Muhammadu (Hausa), among others.<sup>27</sup> The influx of immigrants into the division increased the population. Therefore, migrant labour became a means of procuring a livelihood in the new colonial economy.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview at Gudi with Adamu Slihu, 15 March 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Group interview at the District Head's office in Gudi, 14 March 2004.

<sup>26</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061: Mada District, Administration of, 1943.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 4.1:** Alhaji Idirisu being interviewed at Gudi in March 2004

When taxes were first introduced in Akwanga, the people resisted their payment. The responses to the series of patrols that were carried out in the area between 1910 and 1925 showed how the local people tried to evade tax payments. There was frustration amongst the political officers in Nasarawa province as the people in the area refused to pay their tax. The imposition of direct taxation on the peoples of the region became difficult, if not impossible. In 1912, Mr. Larrymore, the Resident of Nasarawa province, observed: "Situated as we are, with so large a percentage of pagans (about 85% to 90% of our total population), few if any of the more developed schemes of taxation employed in the Northern Provinces can be utilized, except in our large towns such as Jema'a, Keffi, Abuja, Nasarawa, Lafia, Loko and Kotonkarrifi."<sup>28</sup>

At the early stage of British rule in Nasarawa province, the majority of the local people defaulted on paying their taxes. Tax defaulters were dealt with severely and Mr.

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<sup>28</sup> NAK SNP7/4781: Nasarawa Province, Taxation System, 1912.

Larymore recommend that: "non-payers be forced to pay their tax and in addition be fined a similar amount for not doing so."<sup>29</sup> Some people had deserted their villages during tax collection. For example, when a police patrol under Lt. Routledge visited the Mada village of Anji in 1916, it yielded no success because on reaching the village, it had been deserted three days earlier.<sup>30</sup> The troops only succeeded in capturing a number of head of livestock that had been hidden in the bush, which was enough to pay the villagers' tax arrears in 1915. When the patrol visited Boher on 21 July 1916, they discovered that a great number of the villagers had deserted, including all the women, and that they had concealed their livestock in the neighbouring bush.<sup>31</sup> When the people of Boher heard the rumours of the British coming to the village, the men took their women and children to Gwanje and left them there.<sup>32</sup> The patrol also met the same fate when they visited Nungbo and Rija as the villages were deserted and livestock concealed. The troops were then divided into two sections and between them they were able to capture one hundred and fifty head of livestock concealed at Gbugyar, which were sold to pay the tax arrears of Rija and Nungbo.<sup>33</sup> Payment of taxation in kind had more profound effect on the Eggon people. The local people were forced to pay their taxes in livestock and according to Dorward, "the British colonial authorities removed the key to Eggon intensive agriculture, the major source of fertilizer and agriculture production suffered."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> NAK SNP10/133p: Nasarawa Province Jama'a Mada Patrol, 1914.

<sup>30</sup> NAK SNP10/403p: WAFF Patrol to North Mada District, 1916.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Sidi Tide at Gwanje *Sarki*, 1 December 2003.

<sup>33</sup> NAK SNP10/403P: WAFF Patrol to North Mada District, 1916.

<sup>34</sup> Dorward, "Nigerian Hill-Farming Society," p.213. .

The inability of the British to pacify the groups in the division led the area to be “closed”. The first detailed tax assessment was conducted in 1922 by Arden-Clarke, and he imposed an annual tax of 2/- on each male and 1/- on each female.<sup>35</sup> Arden-Clarke was convinced that the tax resources of the area would be improved by the construction of the eastern railway that was to pass through Akwanga. Construction started in 1923 and the labourers recruited were paid 6d per day, and it was assumed that most of this money would return to the government in cash tax revenue. Instead, the labourers used some of the money to buy food to supplement the meagre government rations and other items like clothes and hoes.<sup>36</sup> The people that were able to pay their tax outright from the money saved were those that brought their own food and who had been accompanied by their kinswomen to cook for them.<sup>37</sup>

After the establishment of colonial administrative structures in the division, British officials, in consultation with the village heads of each village, carried out tax assessments. According to Captain Masterton Smith, the District Officer of Akwanga in 1928:

The amount of tax due from each family group is announced by the Divisional Officer to the District Headman receiving receipts for each payment from the District Head’s scribe. The District Head finally brings in the complete amount to the

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<sup>35</sup> NAK SNP 9/830: Mada District, Plateau Province-Administration of, 1922; Rooney, *Arden-Clarke*, p.12.

<sup>36</sup> Interview at Gwanje Sarki with Sidi Tide, 1 December 2003.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*



Native Treasury. The tax usually takes from one to three months to collect after the total have been announced.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, collection of the taxes was left in the hands of the head of every household. In describing the method of tax collection by the headmen in 1922, Arden-Clarke wrote:

The headman has been given a number of sticks and stones corresponding to the number of pounds and shillings at which his village has been assessed. The methods by which he is to collect the tax have been described to him, namely: that every compound is to be visited, that the head of each compound is to collect from every male in his compound old enough to marry and fit to go farming; from every female of marriageable age: the head of the compound will pay this money to the headman.<sup>39</sup>

The collection of the taxes was also left in the hands of the village or ward head's representatives. Taxes were collected between October and December, when the harvest was on.<sup>40</sup> Village headmen received 5 per cent of the total tax collected as commission.<sup>41</sup> District and village heads were usually accompanied during tax assessment and collection by the *yandoka*, who put pressure on the local people to pay. The village and district heads ensured that taxes were efficiently collected as their

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<sup>38</sup> NAK SNP 17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division, 1928.

<sup>39</sup> NAK SNP 9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922.

<sup>40</sup> NAK SNP 17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division, 1928.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

salaries were based on the number of taxpayers in their territory. The desire for remuneration and prestige made the village and district heads treat tax defaulters mercilessly. Those that did not pay were publicly beaten and in some instances they were tied and left in the sun and their property seized.<sup>42</sup> The extreme measures taken to ensure that taxes were paid were in accordance with Lugard's general instruction that colonial officials were to make people pay something, "however poor they may appear to be in order to uphold the principles of taxation."<sup>43</sup> Lugard emphasised that taxes should be paid in cash, even if it meant that District Officers had to pressurise taxpayers to take their goods to the market in order to have cash in hand.<sup>44</sup> This pressure meant that the people had to travel long distances to sell their goods in order to obtain money for tax payments. Mada people from the village of Andaha, for example, had to carry guinea corn on their heads to Wamba market (a distance of about 40 miles). Usually, they set out for Wamba a day before the market day and stayed the night in Bukun in order to make it to the market early.<sup>45</sup> The revenue raised through taxation was kept in the native treasury at Wamba and the following table shows the amount of tax paid from 1923-1944.

Year	Amount
1923/24	£4039.13/3d
1924/25	£4479.1/2d
1925/26	£4966.14/-
1926/27	£5169.4/-
1927/28	£5775.17/6d
1928/29	£5878.3/2d
1929/30	£6533.16/2d
1930/31	£6800.0.0

<sup>42</sup> M. Namo et al, group interview at Wulko, on 29 November 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Crocker, *Nigeria*, p.262.

<sup>44</sup> Lugard, *Political Memoranda*, p.208.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Bala Maishai at Kanbar, 14 November 2003; Alhaji Yusuf at Andaha, 10 November 2003.

1942/43	£5035.2.0
1943/44	£4925.0.0

**Table 4.1:** Amount of Taxes paid to the Native Treasury between 1923 and 1944.

NAK SNP 17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division, Plateau Province, 1929; NAK SNP 9/618: Re-Assessment Report on South Mada District, Lafia Division, 1922; NAK SNP 617/1922: Reassessment Report, Central Mada, 1921; NAK SNP17-K5922: North Mada District, Akwanga Division Reassessment, 1922; NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1933; NAK Jos Prof STA/21: Akwanga Division Annual Reports 1942-46.

The rate of taxation that was imposed varied according to the district. In 1933, it was estimated that in Wamba, where the tin mining industry was the largest employer of labour, the men paid 5/- and the women 2/-.<sup>46</sup> In Nunku district, however, the men paid 4/- and the women 2/-, while in Wana district the men paid 3/- and the women 6d. The burden of tax for each adult according to the District Officer was estimated at about 2/6d.<sup>47</sup>

Another form of taxation utilised by the colonial government was the *jangali*. Collection of cattle tax in Akwanga only began between 1929 and 1930, due to the outbreak of cattle disease in the neighbouring divisions, which forced herdsmen to move into the area with their cattle. £550 was subsequently collected for the year 1929/30.<sup>48</sup> Cattle tax was an insignificant source of revenue for the colonial administration in the division and the estimated amount was usually not met. For example, the amount estimated for 1930/31 was £200; however by 1931 only £48.4s.0d had been collected.<sup>49</sup>

The colonial administration was aware of the difficulties the Eggon had in paying its taxes and in 1917, the District Officer wrote: "Eggon, by reason of its inaccessibility and comparative density of population, has greater difficulty in finding

<sup>46</sup> NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1933.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44: Southern Division, Report on for 1932; NAK Jos Prof 208/1918 Volume II: Gazetteer Plateau Province, 1933.

the cash with which to pay their taxes.”<sup>50</sup> However, in order to encourage them to move to the surrounding plains, the colonial administration increased the indices of tax dramatically. As result of Arden-Clarke’s assessment in 1922, the annual tax burden was increased. For example, the tax of the people of Wana was increased from 41/7/- to 107/14/-; Alogani from 29/16/- to 117/11/- and Wulko from 18/3/- to 107/14/-.<sup>51</sup> The attempts by the colonial administration to collect taxes from the Eggons were met with strong opposition, resulting in armed conflict. Furthermore, the colonial government was aware of the effects that tax collection would have on the relationship between its political officers and the groups who were not used to paying taxes. In 1924, the Acting Resident of Nasarawa, Mr. Norton-Traill, identified the major cause of friction between the colonial administration and some districts of the province. He observed that the communities looked upon the political officers as tax collectors and therefore they became enemies and had to work in a hostile atmosphere.<sup>52</sup> He advised that the work of the political officers would be greatly facilitated if “visible token of submission were allowed to take the form of collective, formal, annual presentation of livestock or other property which would present no real burden...instead of tax which every individual tribesman is made personally to feel.”<sup>53</sup>

The local people used different tactics to avoid the payment of taxes and during tax assessments it was often discovered that the wrong person was put forward as headman, in order to deceive the colonial officials.<sup>54</sup> This did not go down well with the

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<sup>50</sup> SNP17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division, 1928.

<sup>51</sup> NAK SNP 617/1922, Assessment Report, Central Mada, 1921; NAK SNP 618/1922: Reassessment, South Mada, 1921.

<sup>52</sup> NAK 7/2946: Nasarawa Province, Unsettled Districts, 1924.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Arden-Clarke’s letter to parents, 16 March 1923.

government, as tax defaulters and dodgers were severely dealt with. For instance, in 1922, two Mada men who had refused to pay their taxes “were caught, tried and suitably dealt with before the assembled villagers.”<sup>55</sup> They were each given twelve strokes with the cane, which, by that time, was outlawed by the government. Some even tried other tricks in order to avoid paying their taxes in full. For example, after assessing one of the districts, Arden-Clarke called in all the family heads and gave them cowries and beans (representing the pounds and shillings) to remind them of how much tax to pay. He observed:

There was one dear old idiot there; about 90 years old he looked, with a long white beard. I gave him his cowries and beans and he thanked me profusely and put them away in a little leather bag he was carrying. When he got up to go, I noticed cowries and beans dropping on the ground behind him out of a hole in his wretched bag. So I called him back and asked him how much tax he had to pay. He scratched his head for a bit and then opened his bag and had a hunt inside for his cowries. After pulling out bits of tobacco, an old pipe, a couple of arrowheads and a few other oddments he eventually found two cowries (I had originally given him twenty five). He looked a bit puzzled but gravely informed me his tax was £2. After a little talk I showed him the hole in his bag and gave him a new lot of cowries and beans.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Arden-Clarke's letter to parents 8 April 1923.

Resistance to taxation was regarded as an act of rebellion and collective or individual fines were handed out as a punishment for those involved. The resistance became more intensified during the Great Depression when taxes were increased in order to compensate for declining budgets. In Plateau province, the increase in the rate of taxation reached its highest peak in the 1929/30 financial year when a total tax of £76,610 was imposed, making an average of 9/-6 per adult male.<sup>57</sup> This was made worse by the decline experienced in the economy and resulted in severe unrest and protests in different parts of Nigeria. In 1929, a resistance movement associated with *bori* cult started in Akwanga at Wangibi, where youths claimed to be inspired by dreams that a "European would descend from the sky and abolish all authority and taxation."<sup>58</sup> In an attempt by the District Head to prevent the movement from spreading to other villages in Wana District, he acted swiftly, forcing the leaders of the movement underground. They however, returned towards the end of 1930 and restarted the movement. The leaders of the movement urged their kinsmen not to pay their taxes and threatened armed resistance to a visit, either by the District Head or the District Officer himself.<sup>59</sup> They also threatened the life of their own Village Head and the Head of the hamlet. On 19 January 1931, the District Officer, accompanied by the District Head and the *yandoka* and an escort of twelve *yansanda* (government police), went to Wakama and the *yandoka* arrested the leaders of the movement. One of the arrested was wounded in the hand while the other, though he fired three arrows at those chasing him, was captured without

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<sup>57</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.13.

<sup>58</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division, Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

anybody being injured.<sup>60</sup> The men were arrested and tried in the Provincial Court. They were sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment with hard labour. After serving their prison sentences, in 1933, the *bori* leaders converted to Christianity. According to the Sudan United Mission report: "Oloku and Auta Tsenyu made public profession of faith in Church. Auta was a leader of the Bori movement, spirit worship and evil in character."<sup>61</sup>

The nature and organisation of the resistance movement by the youths was not clear but it seemed to take the form of *bori* (the cult of possession). Those who attended the *bori* dances were armed with bows and arrows and it was in the process of arresting the *sarkin bori* (leader of the cult) that one of the ringleaders was arrested.<sup>62</sup> *Bori* is associated with Hausawa and to be possessed means to be mounted by a spirit. Therefore, the person mounted is regarded as a horse (*doki*) of the spirit.<sup>63</sup> The spirit is believed to mount the head of the person through the *tsere* (bow), which most of the members carry.<sup>64</sup> *Bori* dances are held in times of crisis such as epidemics, crop failure and drought. The *bori* movement in Wangibi was triggered by natural disaster, which was in addition to the economic depression. In 1928 caterpillars attacked food crops in Akwanga and this was followed by locust infestations in 1930, 1931 and 1932.<sup>65</sup> This resulted in a food shortage in 1931 in all the districts of the division.<sup>66</sup> The colonial

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Pamphlet: "Fifty Years in the Church of the Mada Hills: 1916-1966", *Church of Christ in the Sudan, Mada Hills Region*, (n.d), p.10.

<sup>62</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division, Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>63</sup> M. Onwuejeogwu, "The Cult of the *Bori* Spirits Among the Hausa," in M. Douglas and P. Kaberry (eds), *Man in Africa* (London, 1971), p.285.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Annual Report, Akwanga Division 1928, NAK Jos Prof 45/1931: Annual Report, Southern Division 1930, NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Annual Report, Southern Division, 1931; NAK Jos Prof 21/1933: Annual Report, Southern Division, 1932.

<sup>66</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Annual Report, Southern Division, 1931.

government was forced to impose a ban on the export of corn from the division and also intervened by purchasing £220 worth of corn that was sold to the people at cost price.<sup>67</sup> The Eggon of the southern district of Akwanga were the people most hit by the disaster and, thus, the *bori* movement became an avenue for seeking supernatural intervention to alleviate their suffering.

There was general unrest in different parts of Nigeria because of the effects of the depression and the government used force in suppressing the protests. As noted by Governor Cameron, “scarcely a period of six months passed without the need to call out the police or even an armed force.”<sup>68</sup> During the depression of the 1930s, one of the commonest ways of tax evasion in Akwanga was the building of houses near to the boundary line with other districts or divisions. It was discovered that during tax assessment, people “removed their houses temporarily” and lived with friends on the other side of the line.<sup>69</sup> However, if assessments were carried out simultaneously, the people would “wander about in the bush until the count had been finished.”<sup>70</sup> Some people also migrated to Keffi because of the severe punishments meted out to tax defaulters by the agents of tax collection in the 1930s.<sup>71</sup> For example, in 1930, the recount of the Mada people in Nunku district showed a decrease of two hundred men who were said to have migrated to Keffi with their wives.<sup>72</sup> In Wamba district, the recount showed a significant decrease of people who were said to have emigrated to Lafia division.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, some of the Hausa people that migrated and settled in

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Cameron, *Tanganyika Service*, pp.284-5.

<sup>69</sup> NAK Jos Prof 21/1933: Southern Division Report on for 1932.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Bala Maishai at Kanbar, 14 November 2003.

<sup>72</sup> NAK Jos Prof 45/1931: Southern Division Annual Report for 1930.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*



Akwanga did so because of tax pressures in Keffi.<sup>74</sup> People's experiences of tax payments during the depression period were that of oppression and deprivation. For example, in Gwanje, whenever the village head confirmed that the village tax had been paid in full, it was greeted with dancing and massive consumption of beer.<sup>75</sup>

In the 1940s, colonial taxation was aimed at inducing labour supply to the mines in Jos and Wamba, as tin mining became an important industry in the British war effort. Both the government and the mining companies were convinced that the best method of inducing labour supply into the mines was through the increase in the rate of taxation. The native authorities were used as the propaganda machines for the dissemination of information about the availability of jobs at the mines.<sup>76</sup> The increase in the official rate of taxation was in addition to other forms of illegal taxes imposed by the District Heads. For example, in June 1942, the District Officer of Akwanga sent out three hundred paper flags to Yamusa, the chief of Mada, to be sold to the people in aid of the Red Cross and the St John's Fund. He unofficially levied a tax on the people for the flags to the tune of £180 and remitted only £23.10s.2d to the divisional office.<sup>77</sup> He enforced a payment of 1/- on all households, 6d on all tax-paying males and 3d, 2d or 1.5d on all tax-paying women.<sup>78</sup> The level of corruption and extortion reached its climax when people in the district began to disregard their leader's authority. The government was forced to act because the situation was affecting the running of the Native Administration, especially with regard to tax collection. Yamusa was arrested and taken to court. He pleaded guilty

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Alhaji Yusuf at Andaha, 10 November 2003.

<sup>75</sup> Group interview at Gwanje with Lumbo, Tache Naluku and Maiganga Zenya, 14 November 2003.

<sup>76</sup> Interview at Andaha with the late Dauda Rija, 22 March 2004. This is further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>77</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4825: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1942.

<sup>78</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061: Nunku District, Mada Administration, 1942.

and was convicted in a Kaduna High Court in March 1943 of extortion and stealing and was sentenced to 18, 12 and 12 months to run concurrently. He was deposed in April the same year.<sup>79</sup>

## CASH CROP PRODUCTION

The most obvious effect of taxing the local people was to compel them to find resources for payments. The outcome was that the peoples of Akwanga were integrated into the international economy as specialised producers of primary commodities. There was a series of trials by the government that sought to encourage the production of export crops in the area. Ginger was the first export crop that was introduced as an experiment. Mr. James, the Assistant Superintendent of Agriculture, visited Wamba in March 1933 in connection with the development of ginger in the division.<sup>80</sup> An experimental ginger farm was started earlier in May 1932 near Wamba and tubers were obtained from Zaria and Keffi. An agricultural *malam* was engaged to supervise the digging up of the crop in preparation for its grading by Mr. James.<sup>81</sup> The quality of ginger produced in Nigeria was generally graded as third class and in Akwanga, it was estimated that it would fetch the farmers £25 per ton. A farmer, according to the District Officer, had to produce "one head load of 60lbs in order to get 12/-."<sup>82</sup> Arrangements were made to extend the cultivation of the crop throughout the division. The Native Administration prison also had a ginger farm that was run by the prisoners in Wamba.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5422: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report 1943-44; NAK Jos Prof 5061: Nunku District, Mada Administration, 1942.

<sup>80</sup> NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Southern Division Report on for 1933.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4: Southern Division Annual Report 1934.

In April 1933, about two hundred farmers were given ginger seeds and a trained agricultural instructor was engaged in demonstrating how to grow the crop in each district of the division. It was hoped that each farmer would “sell a percentage of his crops and see what money he gets.”<sup>84</sup> This scheme made Mr. Maddox, an Assistant District Officer, conclude that there “is little doubt now that ginger cultivation may be the future economic wealth of this division once they really appreciate and realise the amount of money to be made.”<sup>85</sup> A ginger market was held for the first time in Akwanga at Wamba in March 1938 and the United African Company (UAC) undertook to purchase all the ginger available for sale at prices similar to those in Southern Zaria, which was valued as Grade I - 2 ½ d - 1 lb and Grade II - 2d - 1 lb.<sup>86</sup>

The growth of ginger as a cash crop in Akwanga between 1933 and 1938 was slow due to the time and trouble involved in its production.<sup>87</sup> Another major reason for the slow development of the commodity was that the tin mines in Wamba and Jos provided a ready market for the guinea corn produced in the area. The mining companies bought large quantities of guinea corn and sold it at a subsidised price to the beer brewers and food sellers in the mining camps.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, local farmers were not interested in producing ginger as a cash crop because the sale of their surplus grain to the mining companies often solved their cash problems.<sup>89</sup>

Apart from ginger, there were attempts by some European miners to deal in other produce due to inactivity in the mining industry. For example, in 1932, Mr. Stanley

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2964: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report 1938.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> This is further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>89</sup> Interviews at Gudi with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu, 5 March, 2004; group interview at Rinze with Ahmadu Nasara, Musa Waziri Amwe Inusa, 3 March 2004.

Carpenter of the Amari Tin Mines engaged in the purchase of shea nut. The North Mada district had large numbers of shea trees whose surplus fruits, before Mr. Carpenter's patronage, were allowed to rot on the ground. He created a market for the commodity and the first time the produce was sold from the district, it amounted to twenty-five tons. The departure of Mr. Carpenter and the lack of demand of the commodity meant that the trade in shea nuts was later abandoned.<sup>90</sup> Attention was then shifted to the cultivation of groundnuts.

The demand for groundnuts that arose between 1906 and 1914 as a result of the manufacture of margarine in Europe had a profound effect on the history of the commodity in northern Nigeria. The earliest mention of groundnuts in the region was in the poem of Usman Dan Fodio, who supported its taxation. By the mid-nineteenth century, Barth observed that the crop was as important as potatoes in Europe.<sup>91</sup> In the early twentieth century, the centre of groundnut production in northern Nigeria was Kano, from where it spread to other parts of the region. The production of groundnuts, according to Gerald Helleiner, expanded "further and further bushwards to Katsina, Sokoto and Borno Provinces and later into the under-populated Middle Belt of Nigeria."<sup>92</sup> The reason for the expansion of groundnut cultivation, according to Shenton, was the competitive and fluctuating prices of the commodity, which forced the middlemen to expand their trading territory throughout all of northern Nigeria where the crop could be grown.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> NAK Jos Prof 3/1933: Annual Report Plateau Province 1932/33; NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Southern Division Report on for 1933.

<sup>91</sup> J.S. Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports: Origins and Early Development* (Zaria, 1978), pp.36-37.

<sup>92</sup> G.K. Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture, Government and Economic Growth in Nigeria* (Illinois, 1966), p.35.

<sup>93</sup> R. Shenton, *The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1986), pp.89-90.

The origin of groundnut production in Akwanga has not yet been explored. Local farmers generally believe that the crop is as old as the agriculture they have been practising from time past.<sup>94</sup> However, the most likely explanation for its origin is that Hausa traders introduced groundnuts into the area. The success of some of the Hausa traders in the groundnut business meant that they were “sought out, particularly by the Niger Company.”<sup>95</sup> The Hausa traders operated a system of clientage, which helped them to penetrate into parts of the region, using propaganda to convince local farmers that it would be more profitable to sell groundnuts than cotton or millet and painting a rosy picture of what could be bought with the new cash income.<sup>96</sup> Bribes were also given to the village heads, who were expected to popularise a particular clientage network at harvest time.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the groundnut trade from its inception had depended upon a class of middlemen who bought the commodity from farmers.

An important factor that helped the development of groundnut production in Akwanga was that it provided cash for the payment of tax. The government encouraged the production of groundnuts and according to one official, “the people have been and are encouraged to sow groundnuts which the canteens are anxious to purchase and which will provide the people with cash to pay their tax.”<sup>98</sup> The UAC opened two canteens after the completion of the eastern railway that passed through the area. The canteens were opened at Gudi and Mada stations in 1927 and 1930 respectively and the canteen at

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<sup>94</sup> Interview at Kanbar with Bala Maishai, 14 November 2003.

<sup>95</sup> J.S. Hogendorn, “The origins of the Groundnut Trade in Northern Nigeria,” in C.K. Eicher and C. Liedholm (eds), *Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy* (Michigan, 1970), p.39.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> NAK SNP17/1126 Notes on Akwanga Division by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

Gudi also bought almost all the tin produced in the division.<sup>99</sup> They, in turn, sold matches, soap, kerosene, sugar and salt.<sup>100</sup>



**Figure 4.2:** Ruins of the United Africa Company (UAC) store at Gudi

The UAC employed the services of Hausa agents or middle men, buying commodities on their behalf. The groundnut business started slowly in the 1920s. The quantity of groundnuts bought by the company during 1927 was negligible and the price offered was only £7 per ton.<sup>101</sup> The price was not attractive, which made the farmers unwilling to sell their produce at the store. In order to encourage production, the District Officer took the District Heads to the canteen in the hope that their people would bring in their farm produce.<sup>102</sup> The District Heads in turn called their respective village heads and informed them accordingly. The village heads, through their ward heads, relayed the message to their kinsmen.<sup>103</sup> In 1933, efforts were made by the government in Akwanga to get farmers to realise the value of groundnuts and they were persuaded to plant at

<sup>99</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division, Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>100</sup> Interview at Gudi with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu, 5 March 2004.

<sup>101</sup> NAK Jos Prof 31/1928: Akwanga Division Annual Report, 1927.

<sup>102</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Akwanga Division, Report for the year 1928.

<sup>103</sup> Interview at Akwanga with the late Ali Afani, 22 March 2003.

least one acre per adult male.<sup>104</sup> These efforts yielded a result, as an increase in groundnut farms was noticed, especially amongst the Mada and Eggon people, although one colonial official described the production of the crop as a partial failure due to the poor harvest.<sup>105</sup> The Native Administration also planted about three acres of groundnuts at Wamba in the hope that the crop would be useful, both as prisoners' rations and for the purpose of determining the yield per acre, but it proved almost a complete failure.<sup>106</sup> In 1933 also, the district Officer, Mr. Baker, informed the UAC manager that Akwanga would have at least one thousand tons of groundnuts for sale, but towards the end of the year, only twelve tons were brought in.<sup>107</sup> The price at £3 per ton was not attractive, and this was worsened by the instructions issued by the UAC manager that all groundnuts for sale had to be spread out and bad nuts picked out while the remainder were sieved and the small nuts passing through the sieve rejected.<sup>108</sup> The District Officer commented, "the local farmer, having been persuaded rather against his will to grow groundnuts will, I fear, need a deal of persuasion to continue next year."<sup>109</sup> The decline in groundnut prices in the 1930s was not primarily due to fall in the price of margarine or soap or lessening in the consumption of these items, but rather to the depression experienced in the economy. According to Shenton, faced with falling prices, farmers increased their production in order to maintain their incomes.<sup>110</sup>

However, in 1940, there was a large increase in the quantity of groundnuts transported from Gudi railway station. For the period beginning December 1939 up to

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<sup>104</sup> NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Southern Division Report on for 1933.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Southern Division Report on for 1933

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Shenton, *Development of Capitalism*, pp.94-95.

April 1940, about 214 tons were transported, compared to nothing the previous year.<sup>111</sup> The better price of £6 per ton offered at the UAC at Gudi encouraged the production of the crop.<sup>112</sup> The Eggon were the crop's chief growers, although there was a considerable increase in land put under cultivation for groundnuts by the Mada people. The groundnut boom did not last long, however, as the production of the crop steadily declined and the 1940 record was never reached again. The government did little or nothing at all to improve the traditional methods of production and to most of the farmers, the *malamai gona* (agricultural officers) were "less than useless."<sup>113</sup> The farmers were left to exhaust their lands without any new knowledge of agricultural techniques. The technology that was involved in the process of production remained the same as it was during the pre-colonial times.

The major source of income for the peoples of Akwanga did not come from export crop production, but by selling their surplus foodstuff to the mining camps in Jos and Wamba and further to urban centres like Kano and Enugu. The major food crops produced in the area included guinea corn, yam and cassava. Igbo and Tiv railway labourers were responsible for the introduction of yams and cassava into Akwanga in the late 1920s. Before then, guinea corn was the major food crop produced in the area. From colonial sources, it is clear that as late as 1921, there were no yams or cassava produced in the division except for cocoyams.<sup>114</sup> Local farmers maintained that their ancestors "had never planted such crops and that therefore it was not right that they themselves

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<sup>111</sup> NAK Jos Prof 3875: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Reports 1940.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Interview at Akwanga with Alhaji Gwamna, 26 November 2003

<sup>114</sup> NAK SNP 618/1922: Reassessment, South Mada, 1921.



should do so.”<sup>115</sup> However, the change in attitude and the gradual integration of yams and cassava into agricultural production was prompted by natural disasters experienced in the area. As already mentioned, caterpillars attacked food crops in 1928, which was followed by locust infestations in 1930, 1931 and 1932.<sup>116</sup> The locust and caterpillar infestations did not affect the yams and cassava planted by the Igbo and Tiv labourers and soon afterwards, local farmers began to cultivate these crops. According to the District Officer, “it is interesting to note the planting of yams and cassava, the former for the first time in the division, owing to the locust invasion of 1929-1930.”<sup>117</sup> The chief growers of cassava in Akwanga were the Rindre people in Wamba district. The demand for cassava in Wamba was the direct result of the mining activities in the area, which were in addition to the soil conditions and the relative ease of planting and maintaining the crop. Cassava was processed into flour (*alibo*), which was then sold to the labourers at the mining camps in Ninkada, Marmara and Rafin Tabo.<sup>118</sup> The leading villages in the production of cassava and *alibo* were Wamba Kurmi, Wude, Gbata, Wado, Ukusso and Gwagi.<sup>119</sup> The colonial administration also played an important role by encouraging farmers to produce cassava, which the mining companies were ready to buy.<sup>120</sup> The chief of Wamba became a key figure in the government propaganda to convince local farmers with a reminder of the locust infestations of the early 1930s, which affected their crops. According to an informant, Musa Gun: “Mohammed Kore encouraged the production of cassava by planting the crop himself and he was the richest cassava farmer in the whole

<sup>115</sup> NAK SNP 18958: Annual Report, Plateau Province, 1932.

<sup>116</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Annual Report, Akwanga Division 1928, NAK Jos Prof 45/1931: Annual Report, Southern Division 1930; NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Annual Report, Southern Division, 1931; NAK Jos Prof 21/1933: Annual Report, Southern Division, 1932.

<sup>117</sup> NAK SNP44/1932: Annual Report, Southern Division 1930.

<sup>118</sup> Interview at Wamba with Philip Maiangwa, 22 April 2004.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> NAK Jos Prof 21/1933: Annual Report, Southern Division, 1932.

of Wamba. He also distributed the plants freely to farmers and warned them of the impending famine as a result of over-reliance on guinea corn.”<sup>121</sup>

In the southern part of Akwanga, the cultivation of yams and cassava also encouraged the Eggon to migrate to the plains in order to utilise the lands available for the production of these crops. As Dorward observes, “the introduction of yams and cassava cultivation through Tiv and Igbo example and prompted by natural disasters, was directly linked to migration to the plains.”<sup>122</sup> The Eggon migration, however, began earlier than this. In 1923, Arden-Clarke observed, people “were beginning to leave the hills in small numbers.”<sup>123</sup> One of the major incentives for Eggon migration to the plain was the security the British were able to provide and the fear of the nineteenth century depredations from the sub-emirates was no longer an issue. The Eggon people could cultivate their lands on the plain with the assurance of not being captured or enslaved. The movement to the plain was further intensified in the 1930s as “every year more and more people are farming on the plains.”<sup>124</sup>

The success in the cultivation of these new crops boosted local incomes as surpluses were sold to the readily available markets in the Jos and Wamba mining camps. The development of cash crop production in Akwanga was linked to the mining sector, which provided the market for most of the surplus foodstuff produced in the area. However, the inactivity experienced in the industry in the 1930s affected the local market for foodstuffs. For example, the price of guinea corn fell from an annual average during 1929 and 1930 of over £2 per ton to 16/8d in 1931, to 15/6-1/2d in 1932 and

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<sup>121</sup> Interview at Wamba with the late Musa Gun, 4 March 2003.

<sup>122</sup> Dorward, “Nigerian Hill-Farming Society,” p.214.

<sup>123</sup> NAK SNP 96/1924: Annual Report, Nasarawa Province, 1923.

<sup>124</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4: Annual Report, Southern Division 1934.

1933.<sup>125</sup> This affected the income the people needed for the payment of tax. By 1936, with the removal of the restriction on tin mining activities, the division exported over 1,000 tons of grain to the mines.<sup>126</sup> During the Second World War, tin mining became an important industry in the British war effort and in order to keep a steady supply of food to the mines, the colonial government began to participate in the foodstuff business. The government intervention was aimed at keeping down the prices of food and also preventing middlemen from exporting food out of Plateau province. A Restriction Order was imposed in Akwanga in 1943 and the government banned the “removal by whatever means of guinea corn and yams from southern division...except under permit issued by the Divisional Officer.”<sup>127</sup> Permits were issued to the agents of the mining companies and local middlemen were excluded under the guise of protecting the interests of the farmers.<sup>128</sup> In addition to the agents of the mining companies, the Native Authorities were encouraged to participate in the foodstuff business and the local chiefs became agents for both the government and the mining companies.<sup>129</sup> The local chiefs tried in various ways to eliminate any competition from the middlemen in buying foodstuff from the farmers. However, the middlemen, who were mostly Igbos, were undercutting the chiefs by purchasing the crops before it came to the market. They did this by either buying the crops from house to house or by extending credit facilities in the form of goods in payment for crops while still in the field.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> NAK Jos Prof 45/1931: Annual Report, Southern Division 1930, NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Annual Report Southern Division 1931, NAK Jos Prof 21/1933: Annual Report Southern Division 1932 and NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Annual Report, Southern Division 1933.

<sup>126</sup> NAK Jos Prof 1696: Annual Report Plateau Province, 1936.

<sup>127</sup> NAK Jos Prof 1938 Vol. II: Food Control Order, 1943.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Interview at Akwanga with the late Ali Afani, 22 March 2003.

<sup>130</sup> Interview at Gudi with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu, 5 March 2004; NAK Jos Prof 1938 Vol. III: District Officer, Southern Division to Resident Plateau Province, 1949.

Generally, while Akwanga polity was shaped by the colonial experience, the economic basis of the society was undergoing a major transformation. The Eggon, who migrated to the surrounding plains, experienced the most obvious manifestation of change during the colonial period. As already mentioned, Eggon agriculture and settlement had been largely confined to the hills, but during the colonial period, this migration was precipitated by a number of factors, initially security and later the need to earn tax money. The initial fertility of the virgin lowland bush transformed Eggon agriculture. Within a relatively brief period of moving to the plains, Eggon farmers abandoned the laborious and careful use of fertilizers, relying instead upon natural regeneration through bush fallow. Goats and livestock were no longer confined to huts for their dung. However, there was no long-term investment in specific plots of land such as the traditional practices of fertilizer or contour farming. Consequently there was a rapid depletion of natural fertility and increased erosion, leading to outward migration into Lafia and Nasarawa divisions by Eggon in search of virgin lands.<sup>131</sup> It is erroneous as Kasimu is incorrect in arguing that the movement of Eggon to the plains in search of farm lands pre-dates British administration.<sup>132</sup> He noted:

It became also clear that by the beginning of the 20th century the number of Eggon villages increased to such an extent that the entire area of what was then Akwanga Division and at least two thirds (2/3) of the then Lafia Division respectively were and are still inhabited by the Eggon. This gradual expansion of

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<sup>131</sup> NAK MAKPROF 562: District Officer, Southern Division, to District Officer, Lafia Division, 1941; NAK MAKPROF 284B: Resident, Benue to Resident, Plateau, 1951; NAK Jos Prof STA/21: Annual Report for Southern Division, 1953.

<sup>132</sup> Kasimu, et al, *Eggon of Central Nigeria*, pp.23-25.

the Eggon continued until it was gradually stopped. The stoppage of the gradual expansion was due first to the slave raids of the 19/18th century and the 20th century colonialists wars.<sup>133</sup>

As the Eggon abandoned the hills and the population pressures receded, shifting cultivation spread to the upland valleys, where uncontrolled bush fires scorched the oil palms, once so crucial to the Eggon diet and therefore so carefully protected.<sup>134</sup> By the 1950s, palm trees had come to be valued by the Eggon primarily as a source of palm wine, said to have been introduced by Igbo palm-wine tappers.<sup>135</sup>

The migration of Eggon to the plain and lowland agriculture had an effect upon the social organisation of labour. Extensive bush-fallow agriculture, with its annual clearing of the bush and initial hoeing of new fields, imposed heavy labour demands at crucial stages during the year. Consequently, the kin-based party (*burdi*) assumed increased importance. While the work party was an indigenous institution, the development of extensive agriculture gave it increased economic significance. Moreover, new forms of labour organisation were evolved. Influential men organised “new-land clearing parties” (*eku*) in return for food and drink, while more affluent farmers who were able to draw upon income from the cash-crop economy began to employ paid labour.<sup>136</sup> Within a decade of migration to the plains, more successful farmers became increasingly polygamous. The older pattern of dispersed nuclear

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, pp.23-24.

<sup>134</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Annual Report for Akwanga Division, 1928; NAK Jos Prof 35/1934: Annual Report for Southern Division, 1933.

<sup>135</sup> Interview at Neko with Laka Bako, 3 May 2004.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*.

households gave way to larger extended family compounds. In the extended family compounds, the power of the patriarch increased. In part, patriarchal power derived from customary redistribution of produce, extended to the cash-crop sector and thereby involving greater access to the new wealth of the market. However, to an even greater extent the enhanced power of the patriarch rested on their increasing control over labour. The bride price demanded for young women increased as parents sought to retain the services of daughters and suitors or obtain appropriate remuneration.<sup>137</sup> Young men, who could not hope to amass such payments, became even more dependent upon their seniors for the wealth to obtain a wife. In effect, the elders were able to reinvest new-found material wealth into increased social control and authority. Thus, patriarchs regained power over the young men who were otherwise best able to exploit the new farmlands being opened up.

As already mentioned, some influential men and more affluent farmers were able to use income from cash crop production to employ paid labour for land cultivation in Akwanga. However, substantial social change did not result from the cash economy. This was because what the local farmers in Akwanga were producing was of low value compared with the cocoa and coffee produced in western Nigeria. Cocoa and coffee were the only crops in the colonial economy that did radically transformed the standard of living of their producers and the price of the crops was significantly high.

Furthermore, the colonial economy in Akwanga did not alter the basis of political authority of the society because the local chiefs were directly involved in the foodstuff business acting as agents for the government and the mining companies. In fact, the cash economy enhanced the authority of some of the local chiefs, as they were responsible for

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

issuing permits for the purchase of foodstuff out of the division. In addition, they were also engaged in the cash crops production and as already noted, the chief of Wamba became the largest producer of cassava in his district.

## **CONCLUSION**

The peoples of Akwanga had an independent attitude which meant that when taxes were first introduced as sign of accepting British authority, local people resisted paying. Resentment was displayed by people refusing to pay their taxes and/or by engaging in armed conflict with the colonial authorities. However, taxation did bring about changes, especially where local farmers were pushed into cash crop production in order to make money to pay tax. The transition to a cash economy was not smooth, due to the fact that local farmers initially resisted the cultivation of ginger and later groundnuts, both of which were encouraged by the government. However, the major source of income for farmers in the division came from exporting foodstuffs to the mining camps and cities. The major food crops produced were guinea corn, yams and cassava. Tiv and Igbo railway labourers introduced yams and cassava into the area in the 1920s and they were subsequently integrated into the agricultural system. Both the need to earn money to pay taxes and the prospect of virgin lands for cultivation encouraged the Eggon people to migrate to the plains. This had a great effect on labour mobilisation and social organisation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **COLONIAL LABOUR AND TIN MINING, 1922-1945**

This chapter will examine the mobilisation of labour from Akwanga for the construction of roads and railways, for military service and for mining. The imposition of taxation in the colonial society of Akwanga, as mentioned in Chapter 4, was aimed at generating funds to pay for the machinery of government and to build up infrastructure. There was a need to develop a transport network to facilitate the movement of troops and colonial officials and a need to build stations and rest houses to accommodate political officers. It was only through the widespread use of local labour that the essential requirements for building the infrastructure of colonial rule could be met. This was followed by the use of forced or so-called “political” labour in railway construction and road building in Akwanga. In addition, this chapter will discuss the development of tin mining and how the industry affected the communities in the region. Private British firms dominated tin mining during the colonial period and Akwanga, being part of Plateau province, became a major player in the international market as the leading supplier of tin, especially after the Japanese occupation of Malaya during the Second World War. However, tin mining had catastrophic ecological consequences, which intensified pressures on agricultural production.



## COLONIAL LABOUR

The execution of colonial projects in Akwanga depended on the availability of cheap local labour. Labour was needed for road and railway construction and for the building and maintenance of colonial stations. This was obtained by the threat or use of force by the colonial government through the Native Authorities. After the colonial conquest and the subsequent establishment of administrative structures in northern Nigeria, the British were faced with the problem of consolidating and coordinating their rule in a vast region with few communication lines. The lack of roads and railways made it difficult for political officers and military personnel to move around from one province to another. It became essential to develop a communication network using local labour.

At first, forced labour was only permitted for the purpose specified in the Roads Proclamation of 1903.<sup>1</sup> This provided the muscle necessary for installing the infrastructure required for the colonial regime to function. It was used under the guise of “political” labour during railway construction. The earliest railway line to be constructed in northern Nigeria was the Baro-Kano line, which began in August 1907. During the construction of the line, the government did not create the conditions necessary for a free labour market but rather developed and encouraged political labour. Workers on the railway rendered their services by political means through the combined intervention of British officials and local chiefs. They were recruited by means of political coercion and were not expected to remain on the construction site for more than a few weeks at most.<sup>2</sup> They worked in appalling conditions and in 1909, Bishop Tugwell of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) wrote to the High Commissioner of northern Nigeria, Sir William Wallace, about the conditions of the railway

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<sup>1</sup> NAK SNP7/2089/1907: Girouard to Colonial Office, June 1907.

<sup>2</sup> M. Mason, “Working on the Railway: Forced Labour in Northern Nigeria, 1907-1912”, in P.C.W. Gutkind, R. Cohen and J. Copans (eds), *African Labour History* (London, 1978), p.60.

labourers on the Baro-Kano line. He observed that the men recruited did not volunteer their services but were forced to work and the six pence a day they were paid did not even reach them, as a large part of their earnings went to the foremen who transported them.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Tugwell further complained about the working hours of the labourers, which he described as “positively revolting”.<sup>4</sup> He stated that people worked for eight or nine hours at a stretch.

In October 1920, the Secretary of State for the Colonies approved the construction of the eastern railway line from Enugu to Kaduna junction line and the construction work reached Nasarawa province in September 1922. Before the actual commencement of the project, all the district and village heads were instructed by the Resident to give any required assistance for the completion of the job. Furthermore, Mr. Palmer, the Lieutenant Governor, through the Resident of Nasarawa, instructed the headmen of Toto and Umasha districts of Nasarawa emirate and Alago from Doma district of Lafia emirate to supply gangs of fifty men each from Bassa and Igbira for railway work at Ankpa in Benue province.<sup>5</sup> The District Officer of Akwanga was also instructed to make men available for the job. The aim of sending these men to Ankpa was to enable them to gain first hand information and experience with regard to the nature of the railway work that would shortly commence in Nasarawa province. This experiment proved to be disastrous, as the labour gang from Bassa never arrived at Ankpa. Three of them were drowned in a flooded river between Bagana and Ankpa and the rest of the gang fled and on reaching their villages, spread the news with “elaborations and exaggerations,” which resulted in general unrest.<sup>6</sup> A patrol under Captain Norton Traill had to be called into the area to enforce law and order. The labour gang from

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<sup>3</sup> NAK SNP 6 127/1909: Labour Condition at Baro, Bishop Tugwell Complains, 1908.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> NAK SNP17/8/K1838 Eastern Railway, Opening speech by his Excellency, the Governor. 2) Final Report on construction of, 1927.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Doma and half of the original contingent from Igbira reached Ankpa, but almost all of them deserted shortly afterwards, complaining of the lack of money, food and accommodation. The recruits also complained that some of them were surviving on soup made from horseflesh and snails.<sup>7</sup> In addition, many of the labourers drawn from Akwanga died at Ankpa and this made the people in the region to be suspicious when construction reached Akwanga in 1923.<sup>8</sup>

Labour recruitment in Akwanga was carried out through the District Heads, who were allotted a fixed quota of men in proportion to their capacity.<sup>9</sup> Each District Head was responsible for getting his quota together and ensuring that they reached the construction site. At the end of every month, scribes or *malamai* submitted a list of the villages in each district and the number of labourers supplied.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of the railway construction in 1923, over five thousand labourers were recruited from Akwanga and there were 110 recorded deaths.<sup>11</sup> The mortality rate among the labourers was at its highest during the hot season. During the same period, a number of deaths also occurred in the Alizaga village railway labour camp due to leopard attacks. Hausa traders circulated the news of the deaths and this hindered the recruitment of new labour and caused some existing workers to leave.<sup>12</sup> It is still remembered that the “evil spirit” usually came in the night and attacked its victims by breaking their necks before taking the corpse into the bush.<sup>13</sup> The labourers were alarmed by the high death rate and began to construct their huts in the form of a traditional

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> NAK SNP 9/2/1923: Nasarawa Province Annual Report, 1922.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu at Gudi, 15 March 2004; NAK SNP 9/96/1924: Nasarawa Province, Annual Report, 1923.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> NAK Jos Prof 58/1927: Akwanga Division, Report for Year 1926.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Sidi Tide at Gwanje Sarki, 1 December 2003.

pigsty in order to prevent the animal from attacking them.<sup>14</sup> By 1925 after three years of railway work in Nasarawa, the province had supplied 5235 people of which 60 per cent were said to be “volunteers”.<sup>15</sup> Work on the difficult section between Mada and Gudi in Akwanga took a year to complete, with an average of 4250 people being supplied every month.<sup>16</sup> People were recruited from each village and it was made compulsory, unless illness or old age prevented work on the construction site. If a person absconded during the recruitment period, his father was taken in his place. When the person was found, he was duly punished.<sup>17</sup>

Towards the end of the railway construction in Akwanga, the demand for labour drastically reduced. At the beginning of 1926, the monthly supply of labour was in the region of seven hundred workers. This was reduced to five hundred by April, three hundred by August and 250 in November.<sup>18</sup> Recruitment of labour was difficult during the rainy season as the conditions were extreme and the labourers received low wages, usually only six pence a day. It took some people two weeks hard labour to earn enough to pay their taxes. Supply of labour during the rainy season was also difficult as local people preferred to work on their farms. The meagre wages paid were not enough to attract them to abandon their farms. The Acting Director of Railways observed that labour could be supplied during the dry season (between December to March) with little problem, but requests for labour during the rainy season were “simply cruel.”<sup>19</sup> He further stressed, “railway officials quite fail to realise that to take men away from their farms for three months in the rains, is to

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Baba Loko at Ungwan Loko, 8 November 2003.

<sup>15</sup> NAK SNP17/8/K1838 Eastern Railway, Opening speech by his Excellency, the Governor and Final Report on construction of, 1927.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Malam Yakubu Alhaji Yusuf at Andaha, 11 November 2003.

<sup>18</sup> NAK Jos Prof 58/1927: Akwanga Division, Report for Year 1926.

<sup>19</sup> NAK SNP 7/3436/1912: Railway Labour, Nasarawa Province, 1911.

deprive them of their means of living for the rest of the year.”<sup>20</sup> He proposed that people, who by their own free will, worked for at least three or four months on the railway, should be exempt from paying tax. A certificate, according to him, should be given to the workmen, who “would present [the certificate] to the tax collector when the latter made his demand.”<sup>21</sup> Railway construction in Akwanga lasted for four years and affected agricultural production in southern and northern parts of the region. In the Eggon district for example, in addition to the strain of railway construction between 1923 and 1926, the District Head and his *jakadu* (ambassadors) recruited labour for their private farms. This affected the local people as they were forced to abandon their farms during the rainy season, which was the time when they should have been planting their crops. Those that managed to return home during the farming season were exhausted and unable to work fully on their own farms.<sup>22</sup> Despite the illegality of Bashayi’s action, the Eggon people could not report the matter to the District Officer because they were afraid to go to prison.<sup>23</sup> The Eggon district supplied an average of one thousand labourers each month through Bashayi. The demand for labour became unbearable for them in 1926, resulting in their refusal to pay taxes and to cooperate with the District Head.<sup>24</sup> This led to Bashayi’s deposition in June 1926 and six years later, he died “a hopeless bankrupt” in Keffi on 28 August 1932.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Laka Bako at Argbo, 22 April 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Interview at Kagbu with John Angbashim, Nuhu Attah, 6 December 2003, NAK Jos Prof 58/1927: Akwanga Division Report on for year 1926.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> NAK Jos Prof 58/1927: Akwanga Division Report on for year 1926; NAK Jos Prof 21/1933: Southern Division Report for 1932.



**Figure 5.1:** Gudi Railway Station, built in the 1920s

During railway construction, productive labour was diverted from agriculture to the building of colonial infrastructures, which put pressure on food production as women and younger children were left to cultivate the land. Before the Eggon people could settle down after the stress of railway construction, the locust infestation of the late 1920s attacked their crops, resulting in district-wide shortages of food. The completion of the railway, after four years of using so-called political labour, was a great relief to the communities involved.<sup>26</sup> According to some informants, those that returned from railway construction were hardly recognised by their families because of the stress involved.<sup>27</sup> They were kept away from the village for some time until they were “purified”, before being admitted back into the village.<sup>28</sup> The purification ceremony was conducted at the village shrine in the forest and women were not allowed to attend.

The people of Akwanga region also supplied their labour for the construction of roads, bridges, residential and government rest houses. At the early stage of British rule in

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<sup>26</sup> Group interview with Lumbo, Tache Naluku and Maiganga Zenya at Gwanje, 13 November 2003.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

the region, the priority of the colonial administration was to make the communities accessible through the construction of roads and bridges. One of the earliest bridges constructed in the division was the Richa bridge along the Akwanga-Keffi road in 1911. In 1922, the Resident of Nasarawa province, Mr. Sciortino, recommended a large programme of bridge construction in order to overcome the difficulty of communication.<sup>29</sup> Bridges across all the principal rivers from the west to the east of the division were constructed from 1922 to 1923 using local labour.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, in 1927, the first major road constructed by the Akwanga Native Administration was the motor road from Akwanga to Wamba, a distance of 17 miles. The road was constructed to serve the interests of the mining companies working in the division, and was completed in mid-1927. By November of that year the first consignment of tin was carried by lorry from Wamba to Gudi.<sup>31</sup> In 1928, the Divisional Officer wrote in the annual report that the roads constructed enabled the manager of Amari Tin Company "to run a half-ton Ford lorry to Gudi throughout the wet season."<sup>32</sup> Additional roads were constructed in 1929 resulting in the linking of Nunku with Akwanga and Akwanga with the foot of the Eggon hills.<sup>33</sup> By 1936, the major road used in the area was the Jama'a boundary to Gudi road via Wamba (Jos-Wamba-Gudi-Keffi-Nasarawa-Loko). Feeder roads, such as Andaha to Akwanga (10 miles), Kwarra to Wamba (14 miles) and Akwanga to Lafia boundary (25 miles) also used local labour for their construction.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5061: Mada District Administration of, 1922; NAK SNP 17/11263: Akwanga Division Plateau Province, Notes on by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, NAK SNP 1391/1923: Nasarawa Province Bridges (over rivers between Akwanga and Farin Ruwa), 1922.

<sup>31</sup> NAK Jos Prof 31/1928: Akwanga Division Annual Report, 1927.

<sup>32</sup> NAK Jos Prof 14/1929: Akwanga Division Report for the Year 1928.

<sup>33</sup> NAK SNP 17/11263: Akwanga Division Plateau Province, Notes on by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

<sup>34</sup> NAK Jos Prof 1481 Communications in Plateau Province, 1939.

Local people recruited for the construction of roads and bridges were drawn from the immediate surrounding area. The recruits had to arrange for their own food and accommodation for the duration of their stay at the construction site and the time spent on the construction site varied according to the nature of the project. Women were excluded.<sup>35</sup> Recruits usually worked for at least a week before being relieved by new labourers.<sup>36</sup> Musicians were hired to play to the workers during the construction in order to induce them to work.

There was a deliberate policy by the government to avoid the enactment of laws and regulations on the use of so-called “political labour.” The colonial administration considered the employment of such labour as “adequately controlled by native law and custom.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, by stereotyping the conditions under which compulsory labour was employed, the “issue of precise regulations might have retarded its discontinuance.”<sup>38</sup> However, in 1933, the Secretary of the Northern Provinces wrote to the Residents and District Officers in the region that the government could no longer avoid the enactment of a law regulating compulsory labour. He argued that compulsory labour “will endure longer if it remains cloaked under native law and custom.”<sup>39</sup> The change of policy regarding compulsory labour in Nigeria was a direct result of the British government’s ratification of the treaty at the International Labour Conference of the Forced Labour Convention in 1933. The terms of the Convention made provision for ending of the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms, “within the shortest possible period.”<sup>40</sup> However, the Convention in its definition of

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with the late Dauda Madaki at Abu on 26 November 2003.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> NAK Jos Prof 591: Secretary Northern Provinces to Residents: Forced Labour in Nigeria, 1933-1945.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Regulations made Under the Forced Labour Ordinance, 1933* (Lagos, 1938), p.3.



forced or compulsory labour excluded work of purely military character, work forming part of a normal penal sentence, work exacted in cases of emergency, as well as minor communal services.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the use of forced labour where necessary was restricted to able-bodied men and to a maximum period of sixty days in a year.

The people of Akwanga were also enlisted into the colonial army during the Second World War. In executing the war, the British recruited over half a million soldiers from their African colonies, who were mostly enlisted as non-combatants (labourers in uniform). However, some of them received training in arms and assumed combatant roles.<sup>42</sup> The non-combatants were recruited under terms similar to those of the combatants and, according to Killingray, recruits in West Africa were usually allocated to combatant and non-combatant units based on immediate manpower needs and on the basis of the physical appearance of the individual recruits.<sup>43</sup> The Second World War, which local people referred to as “*yakin Hitler*” (Hitler’s war) attracted some volunteers from Akwanga. This was due to propaganda and the intensive recruitment drive carried out by the colonial administration. Recruitment in Akwanga was carried out in three batches and recruits included, among others, Sergeant Buba, Bashayi Wana, John Mada, Musa Wamba and Audu Wamba.<sup>44</sup> According to Sergeant Buba, they joined the army voluntarily because of the effectiveness of the British propaganda and the promise of a better life after the war. Sergeant Buba was among the ten people recruited in the third batch from Akwanga; they were all sent to Ethiopia to fight the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, pp.3-7.

<sup>42</sup> D. Killingray, “Labour Mobilisation in British Colonial Africa for the War Effort, 1939-46,” in D. Killingray and R. Rathbone (eds), *Africa and the Second World War* (London, 1986), p.71.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.72.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Sergeant Buba (retired) at Andaha 12 March 2004; NAK Wamba District DEP/64: Royal West Africa Frontier Force General Correspondence, 1939-1945; NAK 5927/S.3: Demobilized Soldiers, Return of, 1945.

Italians and later redeployed to Burma to fight the Japanese.<sup>45</sup> They were paid salaries and each soldier had a pay book given to him by the military authorities. The soldier's salaries could either be paid at the war front or sent back to Nigeria for safekeeping.<sup>46</sup> Some of the soldiers did send part of their salaries directly to the District Officer at Wamba for safe custody until their return. For example, in the general military correspondence for Akwanga, Audu Wamba sent the sum of £8 to the District Officer for safekeeping in April 1945, because he was afraid to give it to his family as they "will squander it uselessly and I will have nothing to depend when I shall come."<sup>47</sup> Others sent money to their families through the District Officer, with instructions on how to disburse it. Such instructions were effectively carried out to the satisfaction of the soldiers. For example, in October 1945, John Mada instructed the District Officer to stop paying his wife the allowance he usually sent because she refused to write to him.<sup>48</sup> British political officers therefore became the contacts between the soldiers and their families and the soldiers enquired about and received messages from their families through them.

After the war, the majority of soldiers that enlisted were demobilised and they returned home with gratuity paid to them. According to Sergeant Buba:

Those of us returning from the war disembarked at Lagos, which was the demobilisation centre and where the discharge process was completed. We were given a post office savings book which contained our outstanding as well as being issued with a discharge

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Sergeant Buba at Andaha 12 March 2004.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> The letter of Audu Wamba in NAK Wamba District DEP/64: Royal West Africa Frontier Force General Correspondence, 1945.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

certificate. At the end of our disengagement, we received all our financial entitlements with gratuity.<sup>49</sup>

The earlier promise of a better life after the war became illusive after the ex-soldiers returned home. According to Baba Baduku, “after the war ended, we could not find employment with the government, but instead, they encouraged us to go back to our farms.”<sup>50</sup> Based on the findings of the West African War Council established in 1945, the government decided that “farming should provide the greatest industry” for the absorption of the ex-servicemen to civilian life.<sup>51</sup> In fact the position of the government was made known to the soldiers before their repatriation and demobilisation: “It was hoped that many of you who were farmers will return to your farms and settle down among your own people...there will be a great demand for all the produce such as palm oil, palm kernels and groundnuts which this country produces, so there are good prospects for farmers prepared to work.”<sup>52</sup> Those that did not want to go back to their villages were encouraged to settle in a specially designed farm settlement. Two of these farm settlements were established at Jama’a and Shendam to cater for ex-soldiers from Plateau province. In order to make the scheme successful, the government carried out advanced planning and research and gave the capital necessary for its success. Despite this, the Shendam resettlement scheme succeeded while that of Jama’a was closed down.

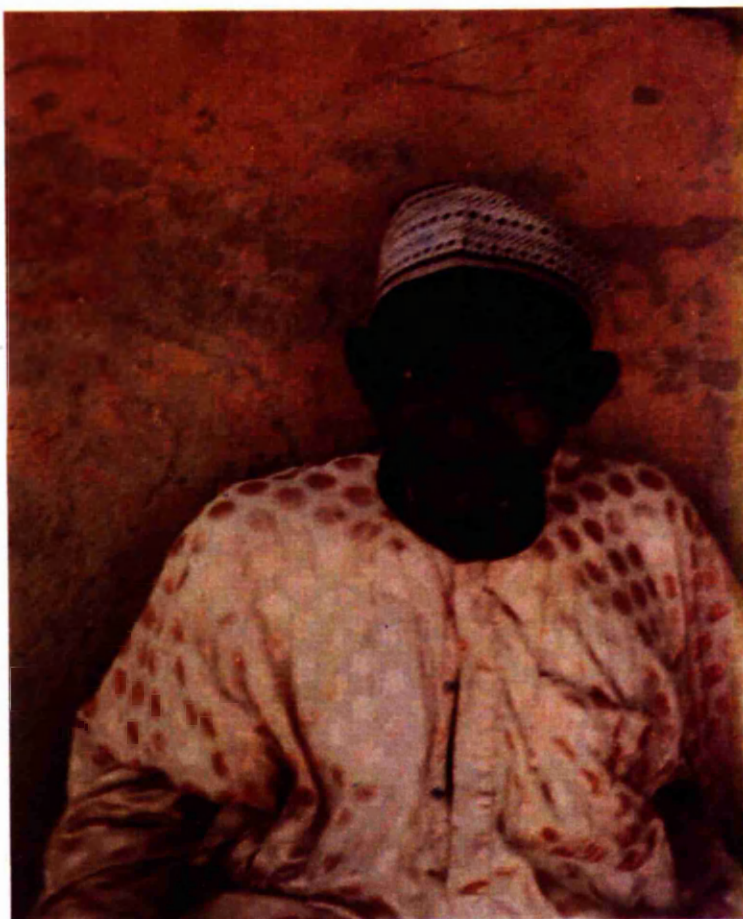
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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Sergeant Buba at Andaha 12 March 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with the late Baba Baduku at Akwanga, 6 March 2004.

<sup>51</sup> NAK Wamba District DEP/64: Royal West Africa Frontier Force General Correspondence, 1940-45.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 5.2:** Retired Sergeant Buba, April 2004

The ex-soldiers from Akwanga all returned home, hoping to find jobs with the Native Authority. They were not left under any illusions of a guaranteed job on their return and Governor Richard issued a warning that the returning soldiers must be told that there “is no work available to them.”<sup>53</sup> At the end of the war, some of the soldiers that returned to Akwanga experienced difficulties in securing jobs outside farming. The pre-war occupation of the majority of the demobilised soldiers was farming; therefore, they returned to their farms, while the Native Administration only employed five ex-servicemen. One other ex-

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<sup>53</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5/1 No. C174 Vol. H: Governor to Secretary of State, October 1945.

soldier found a job with a trading firm.<sup>54</sup> Buba and Audu Wamba were fortunate to secure jobs with the Native Authority police and Buba was posted to Andaha as the head of the *yandoka*.<sup>55</sup>

## COLONIAL TIN MINING

Railway construction in Nigeria during the colonial period made possible the large-scale exploitation of its mineral resources. The railway enabled Plateau province to become an important exporter of tin during the First and the Second World Wars. The peoples of Akwanga contributed to this mining process. There have been studies carried out on tin mining in Plateau province, although they give little or no emphasis to Akwanga, which was part of the province and which also engaged in tin mining.<sup>56</sup> It is difficult to document colonial tin mining in Akwanga, as the small-scale operations were not clearly differentiated in the reports of the Nigerian Mines Department. Possibly, smaller companies failed to supply the required information on a regular basis and record keeping was fairly casual.

The RNC was aware of local mining activities in what would later become Plateau province at the turn of the twentieth century. A representative of the RNC wrote in 1890 that tin "a new product, seemed to me to be of excellent quality."<sup>57</sup> Having received the information about the existence of tin in the Plateau region, the RNC laid claim to it, based on an earlier agreement with the emir of Bauchi in 1888 for an annual fee of £100 payable in salt.<sup>58</sup> In 1902, the government issued the Mineral Proclamation and granted an exclusive

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<sup>54</sup> NAK Jos Prof STA/21: Akwanga Division Annual Reports, 1945-46.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Sergeant Buba at Andaha, 12 March 2004.

<sup>56</sup> See the works of Freund, *Capital and Labour*, C.K. Gonyok, "A History of Tin Mining Industry on the Plateau," Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (1984); P. Bower, "The Mining Industry," in M. Perham (ed), *Mining, Commerce and Finance in Nigeria* (London, 1947).

<sup>57</sup> PRO Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 84/2109: Claude Macdonald's Report, 1890.

<sup>58</sup> NAK SNP 9/488/1923: Royalties on Mineral, Correspondence Relating to 1888-1905.

licence (Number 1) to the RNC to prospect. The licence was issued at the cost of £2196 under the terms of the proclamation.<sup>59</sup> In 1911, prospectors explored the possibilities of mining activities in Akwanga, which was then under Nasarawa province. In his earlier research based on a mineral survey of northern Nigeria, Dr. Falconer noted the frequent occurrence of tinstone in parts of Nasarawa province. This attracted a lot of attention because the localities where the deposits were found had easy access to the Benue, down which most of the ore was shipped, before the construction of the railway.<sup>60</sup> The interest in Nasarawa tin reached its peak in June 1912 with the discovery of the Jama'a "lode" which attracted a considerable number of mining prospectors into the province. The colonial government halted attempts at exploration by the mining companies because the region was not fully brought under British control. The government order was ignored by Mr. Campbell however, who as we have seen in Chapter 2, continued to prospect in the area until his murder at Wulko in May 1912.<sup>61</sup> After the Wulko incident, the government refused to grant mining licences in Akwanga because the area was considered to be unsettled.<sup>62</sup>

Before the advent of the British into Akwanga, local people did not engage in tin mining.<sup>63</sup> During the colonial period, tin mining was carried out mainly in the Nungu and Mama districts, although other parts of the division had smaller tin deposits. In 1913, Mr. Malcolm wrote a report on the mining areas of Akwanga. On the northern and southern districts, he noted:

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> C. Raeburn, "The Tin Fields of Nassarawa and Ilorin Provinces," *Geological Survey of Nigeria* 5 (1924), p.9.

<sup>61</sup> NAK SNP15: Annual Report, Kano Province, 1909-1910; NAK, SNP7/2726/1912 Campbell, D.A. Prospector, Death of.

<sup>62</sup> PRO CO 446/106: Tinfields, Prospecting on the Ferin Rua [sic], 1912.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Baba Usman at Andaha, 22 March 2004; Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, 28 February 2004.

Wai-Wai has a prospecting camp in its vicinity... the people are friendly and gave no trouble. Gudi is a small mining camp occupied by the tin trading company... Europeans and labourers can move freely in any direction... in Gako and Wulko, I found the attitude of the people perfectly friendly and more intelligence displayed than in the Northern parts of the Districts.<sup>64</sup>

A trigonometrical survey was carried out in 1927, which was completed by 1929 and resulted in the opening of Wana and Nunku districts to prospectors. In June 1929, considerable prospecting was carried out in these districts. The East Africa Explorers had also taken up leases south of the Mada hills.<sup>65</sup> Commenting on tin mining amongst the Mada people, an informant, Baba Usman noted:

My grandfather told me that the white tin miner came with an interpreter to tell the Mada people they had come to work peacefully and not to fight. My grandfather agreed to lead the European miner to the stream where they searched and found out there were tin deposits around the Mada hills. Consequently, my grandfather was entrusted with the work of building the mining camp, which he did and later became the caretaker of the camp.<sup>66</sup>

The peoples of Akwanga were initially reluctant to work in the tin mines. For instance, an attempt by the European miners to persuade the Kantana people to work in the

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<sup>64</sup> NAK SNP 10/520p/1913: Provincial Annual Report, Nasarawa, 1913.

<sup>65</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division, Report on for 1931-32.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Baba Usman at Andaha, 22 March 2004.

mines was unsuccessful: "they looked upon the whole matter as a joke and learned readily, but fast as the tin was won they flung it back into the stream. When told that the tin could be converted into money they said that they could neither eat nor drink money and that the same applied to tin."<sup>67</sup> Recruitment of labour for the mines was not difficult during the dry season as paid labour was one of the quickest means of obtaining cash for tax payments. The mining camp "forms a source from which money can be obtained for payment of tax after two or three weeks work."<sup>68</sup>

The mining work force was made up both of the people from Akwanga and migrants from within and outside the province. The wages paid to the mine labourers varied according to their skill. The local people worked as casual labourers, initially at the lowest and most unskilled level, carrying soil in the head pans while Hausa permanent workers held semi-skilled positions. According to an informant, Muhammadu Allahnana:

The people we met in control at the tin mines in Marmara were Hausa. They treated us badly. They would get the soil and put in our headpans, not minding our strength to carry it. When the process is nearing the tin ore, the soil became watery...they used to put watery soil in the headpans so that it would be pouring on our faces. When we told them that what they were doing was bad, they ignored us.<sup>69</sup>

Before the construction of the Bauchi light railway in 1913, Hausa porters carried most of the tin to the coast. In 1908, it was carried at the cost of £29.10s per ton and only

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<sup>67</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2/10/2627: Resident Nasarawa Province to Secretary, Northern Provinces, 1918.

<sup>68</sup> SNP17/11263: Notes on Akwanga Division by Captain Masterton Smith, 1928.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, 28 February 2004.



545 tons were exported.<sup>70</sup> The completion of the light railway from Bukuru to Zaria increased exports to 6,545 tons by 1914, reaching 13,009 tons in 1928. The costs of freights of tin were further reduced from about £11 to £8 per ton when the eastern railway from Port Harcourt reached Plateau.<sup>71</sup> The reduction in the cost of transport made Nigeria a leading exporter of tin. The completion of the railway to the tin field rendered thousands of porters, who used to carry tin ore to the coast, jobless. However, the mining companies operating in the area absorbed most of them.<sup>72</sup> The new railway construction also made it possible to easily supply artisan labour from the southern part of Nigeria to the tin mines. The influx of labourers from parts of Nigeria to seek employment in the mines resulted in labour glut experienced in 1914, which led to the reduction of wages from 9d to 6d a day.<sup>73</sup>

However, the outbreak of the First World War increased the demand for tin, pushing the price from £150 per ton in 1913 to £200 in 1915.<sup>74</sup> Earlier in 1914, because of the reduction in wages, the supply of labour to the mines decreased from 17,883 employed in 1914 to 14,316 in 1915.<sup>75</sup> By the end of 1915, the mining companies were forced to increase wages, which stimulated a steady supply of labour. By 1916, the number of workers had increased to 19,250.<sup>76</sup> The war brought a steady increase in the demand for labour and taxation was used as a weapon of coercion to induce labour supply to the mines. In 1918, the Ministry of Munitions in London requested for increase in tin production from Nigeria, which resulted in an even greater demand for transport and mine labour. The mining companies suggested to the colonial administration that labour should be conscripted, but

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<sup>70</sup> Bower, "Mining Industry," p.16.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> NAK SNP11 32m/1913: Government Inspector of Mines, Notes on the Tin Mines, 1912.

<sup>73</sup> NAK SNP11 36m/1914: Nigeria Chamber of Mines. Annual Report of Work for the Year Ended 1914.

<sup>74</sup> NAK SNP 11 207m/1914: Mines Departmental Annual Report, 1914, 1915.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> NAK SNP17 ARI/27: Annual Report of the Mines Department for the Year 1916 to 1919.

the government responded that it did not wish to use even “mild coercion on the Plateau pagans.”<sup>77</sup> However, in June 1919, the Nigerian Chamber of Mines unanimously passed a resolution that the government should increase the rate of taxation in order to induce labour supply to the mines.<sup>78</sup> In September 1919, the colonial administration notified the Chamber of Mines that a 10 per cent increase had been levied on the local people and by 1921 the rate of taxation had gone up by a total of 28 per cent over the rate in 1919.<sup>79</sup>

The tin boom of the 1920s was shattered by the Great Depression of the 1930s, which had a disastrous consequence on the economy of the mining communities. During the depression years, there was a sharp reduction in tin output and a drastic reduction in the number of workers and their wages, as the tin price slumped from £200 in May 1929 to £105 in December 1930.<sup>80</sup> According to the Resident of Plateau province, this had great consequences for the people of Plateau who had come to rely on the tin industry for the sale of both their labour and food in order to pay their taxes.<sup>81</sup> The mining companies responded to the depression by reducing their workforce and the wage bill for African workers declined from £665,000 in 1928 to £98,000 in 1933.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the mining companies retrenched many of their workers and also forced those that were still at work to accept grain as part payment for wages. The retrenchment of workers by the mining companies left the affected people without any alternative means of employment. Those mostly affected were immigrants from outside the province who had no farms to go back to and some of them therefore moved to Wamba, Jos and Bukuru townships in search of petty jobs while

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<sup>77</sup> Nigeria Chamber of Mines, Minutes for Meeting for November 1918.

<sup>78</sup> NAK SNP 10/125p/1919: Labour for Mines, 1918.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> NAK Jos Prof 21/45: Plateau Province Annual Report, 1930.

<sup>81</sup> NAK Jos Prof 24/11/1932: Plateau Province Annual Report, 1931.

<sup>82</sup> Freund, *Capital and Labour*, p.82.

others took to stealing. There was a dramatic increase in the number of theft and burglary incidents as a result of the economic hardships experienced by the retrenched workers and in 1931, the Resident of Plateau wrote:

while one naturally felt the deepest sympathy with those who suffered loss through burglary or theft, it must be remembered that the mining companies, when closing down their machinery, merely paid off their African artisans and then left them to fend for themselves at a time when cost of living was high and further employment impossible to obtain.<sup>83</sup>

The outbreak of the Second World War had a dramatic effect on the demand for labour in the tin mines. The British loss of Malaya to Japan in 1942 meant that Britain had lost its most valuable source of tin and the government therefore moved towards a policy of stimulating production in Nigeria. However, war time conditions meant that importing machinery for mines was difficult and in order to meet high production targets the government had resort to the conscription of forced labour, which had been outlawed in 1933. Large-scale conscription for tin production in wartime, especially for private companies, was a departure from the government policy of forced labour. The British government, however, argued that conscription was necessary for the war effort and came under category (d) of the provisions of Article 2 of the forced labour convention.<sup>84</sup> In order to give a human face to the conscription of forced labour to the tin mines, Orde-Browne of the Colonial Office argued that the work in Nigerian mines was “much more akin to

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<sup>83</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2/24/11/1932: Plateau Province, Annual Report, 1931.

<sup>84</sup> NAK Jos Prof 3/1/2018/S2: Mines field Labour Reports 1942-43.

agriculture...being merely the shifting of soil.”<sup>85</sup> Between February and July 1942, a total of 19,200 labourers were needed for the mines and only 8,000 were supplied.<sup>86</sup> The failure to conscript labour was attributed to inadequate organisation, food problems, inadequate training and a lack of supervision.<sup>87</sup> In February 1942, the Mines Labour Advisory Committee was formed in Jos under the chairmanship of the Chief Inspector of Mines. Its purpose was to allocate labour quotas to the provinces carried only to arrange transport and the distribution of labourers to the mines and to supervise food supplies and welfare. Labourers were expected to remain in the mines for at least two months, but some of them deserted after only a week because of the lack of adequate welfare facilities. As a result of the high rate of desertion, the Resident of Plateau proposed that deserters should be searched for and retrieved through the NA system, using the same method as done for soldiers. If caught, deserters were liable to two weeks imprisonment and a full sixteen weeks labour service on the mines.<sup>88</sup> Conscrip labourers received 2/8d per day and a free blanket at the expense of the Ministry of Supply.<sup>89</sup> Some colonial officials were detailed to engage in a propaganda tour around the divisions of Plateau province in order to encourage labour supply to the mines.<sup>90</sup> The NAs in Akwanga, as part of their contribution to the war effort, recruited political labour for mines in Wamba and the government especially acknowledged Wamba NA for its “helpful” recruitment.<sup>91</sup> The conscripts to the mines in Wamba during the

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<sup>85</sup> PRO CO 583/269: Compulsory Labour Mines, 1940-45; PRO CO 30569/1 Orde-Browne Memoranda, 1942.

<sup>86</sup> PRO CO 583/269: Compulsory Labour Mines, 1940-45.

<sup>87</sup> NAK Jos Prof 3/1/2018/S2: Mines Field Labour Reports 1942-43 and Mines Field Labour Regulation of wages and conditions of service, 1944.

<sup>88</sup> NAK Jos Prof 1/2018/S.2: Reports on Minesfield Labour, 1942.

<sup>89</sup> NAK Jos Prof 1/1/12018/S.2: Reports on Minefield Labour, 1943.

<sup>90</sup> NAK Jos Prof 17/4/33018: Plateau Province Annual Report, 1942.

<sup>91</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4825: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual, 1942.

war were called *diban gwamna* (Governor's conscripts). According to one informant, Usman Ali:

The conscription to the mines started during the outbreak of the war. We were not told the nature of the job awaiting us in the mines, but we were informed that instead of forcing us to go to the war front, our contribution was to work in the mines. This, of course, was a fair bargain to us. The District Officer, accompanied by the police, usually went to the village heads and notifies them about the number of people their respective villages would need to supply. Our village head distributed sticks to correspond with the number of people required and those that had the stick were forced to go to the mines. Those that refused to go were fined 5 shillings, which was a big money in those days.<sup>92</sup>

It was the high death rate among the Tiv labourers from Benue province, which reached 10 per cent in 1943, that caused deep concern in the Colonial Office and House of Commons and led to the end of forced labour in the tin mines.<sup>93</sup> The continued criticism of labour conscription into the mines resulted in the Colonial Office being advised by one of its staff, Gerald Creasy, in August 1943, that it was time to end conscription.<sup>94</sup> It was consequently decided that the best results would be achieved by raising the number of conscripts on the mines as high as possible during the dry season of 1943-44 and then by

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Usman Ali at Kwarra, 23 April 2004.

<sup>93</sup> H. Macmillan, *Blasts of War, 1939-1945* (London, 1967), 169-71; Freund, *Labour and Capital*, 147.

<sup>94</sup> Freund, *Capital and Labour*, p.148.

stopping conscription completely at the end of April 1944, just before the farming season began.

The supply of labour to the mines was determined by the wages the mining companies were willing to pay and any reduction on wages resulted in a decrease in labour. However, according to one informant, some labourers were tied to their life in the mines by their love of women, beer and gambling.<sup>95</sup> In order to meet their daily requirements for food, labourers attached themselves to *uwar tuwo* (food seller) who supplied food at an agreed price for the week. It was estimated that between 30 and 40 per cent of the worker's weekly wages went to the *uwar tuwo* while the remaining amount was spent on taxes, gambling and prostitutes.<sup>96</sup> However, some labourers avoided making arrangements with the *uwar tuwo* by bringing their own food to the camp for the duration of their stay.<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 5.3:** Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, March 2004

Alcohol was another expense for miners. In fact, the mining companies encouraged taking of alcohol in their camps by sponsoring the brewing of local beer. The companies recruited

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara on 28 February 2004.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

women and paid them a wage to brew and sell beer to the labourers. They also supplied guinea corn to the brewers at cost price.<sup>98</sup> The range of alcoholic beverages brewed in the camps was *burukutu*, *pito* and *busa*. A slightly milder and sweeter form of beer, *busa* was often used for introducing labourers who were not used to taking alcohol into the beer drinking habit.<sup>99</sup> From initially drinking *busa*, the labourer would graduate to either *burukutu* or *pito*: the former was the most common form of beer that was brewed while the latter was the more refined brand extracted from *burukutu*. The *gidanje giya* (beer parlours) were run by women hired by mining companies. They were known as *magajiyoyi* and were assisted by bar attendants who were mostly *karuwai* (prostitutes). They rented rooms in the camps to conduct their business and were patronised by the labourers.<sup>100</sup> The customers at the beer parlours were entertained by *masun goge* (musicians) who always came to Wamba on Fridays and visited the *gidaje giya* on Saturdays to sing. Thus, apart from paying the *uwar tuwo* over 30 per cent of their wages, the labourers spent a reasonable amount of the remaining money on beer and prostitutes. The labourers, under the influence of alcohol, engaged in *cha cha* (gambling), which was carried out close to the beer parlours. Gambling was rife in the camps especially in Ninkada and Marmara.<sup>101</sup> The *yan cha cha* (gamblers) spread their mats by the beer parlours and the labourers gambled their wages in the vain hope of winning more money. This hardly ever happened since gambling was essentially a syndicate whereby its organisers were in command of the tricks involved and they simply cheated those who invested in the game.<sup>102</sup> Labourers who abstained from consuming of

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Baba Usman at Andaha, 22 March 2004; Interview with Usman Ali at Kwarra, 23 April 2004; Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, 28 February 2004.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

alcohol often spent their money on gambling. Gambling was a major drain on the wages of the labourers and in 1951, the Resident of Plateau observed:

The fantastic extravagance of the average labourer and his lack of appreciation of the need to save against the future and wasteful habits such as gambling, tend to have a disturbing effect on prices and other corrupting influences. Many consider that the introduction of a wage-earning economy to certain areas has contributed to the decline in the standard of morality and a tendency to break away from established traditions, good or bad.<sup>103</sup>

Their addictions to drinking, prostitution and gambling left some of the labourers in perpetual poverty. Whenever wages were paid on Saturdays, the *barkokin kuza* (mining camps) were busy with traders bringing cloth, food and other items for sale.<sup>104</sup> It should be noted that some of the labourers, before the weekly wage payments, were already indebted to the *magagiyoyi*, *karuwai* and *uwar tuwo* for their services and the money was therefore used to clear outstanding debts and sometimes to make advanced payments with the remainder.<sup>105</sup> This created a vicious cycle of debt, in which the labourers spent their wages before they were received, resulting in an enforced stay in the mining camps. Drunkenness also seriously undermined the productivity of the workers.<sup>106</sup> The mine managers insisted

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<sup>103</sup> NAK Jos Prof 114; Plateau Province, Notes on by the Residents, 1935-55.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Lasisi at Wamba, 1 March 2004.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, 28 February 2004.



that the *magagiyoyi* at Marmara and Ninkada should therefore only brew beer for consumption from Friday to Sunday.<sup>107</sup>



**Figure 5.4:** The two remaining labourer's quarters at Marmara, built in the 1930s

Traditional tools such as hoes, spades and calabashes were used for tin mining. Mining companies provided these tools for their workers and also paid for damage to the equipment. In some cases, the companies employed blacksmiths to repair broken tools such as diggers and head pans which were used in the mining process.<sup>108</sup> The capitalist take-over of the tin mines did not improve the technology employed in the mining industry. The tin ore that was exported before the outbreak of the First World War was produced using traditional methods. In other words, colonial tin mining companies “were only doing on a large scale what the black man has been doing for generations.”<sup>109</sup> The only machinery introduced into the tin fields were head pans and shovels. According to Freund, the tools of production remained what they had been and “in fact the industry regressed through the

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Calvert, *Nigeria and its Tin*, p.137.

elimination of smelting.”<sup>110</sup> He further maintained that the principal changes that had occurred included the brutal subjugation of the peoples of Plateau, the complete destruction of the indigenous tin industry and the dispossession of the local population’s land through legislation.<sup>111</sup>

The granting of mining licences to the mining companies by the government raises a fundamental question of land ownership in Akwanga. The communities in the area depended on farming, with sectoral supplements such as hunting, fishing and craft production, for survival. After the incorporation of northern Nigeria into the British Empire, the government made a series of proclamations regarding land and its ownership. According to Lugard, these land proclamations began the process of weakening and undermining the pre-capitalist mode of production.<sup>112</sup> The 1900 proclamation made by Lugard in Lokoja, by implication gave the colonial government the lands hitherto acquired by the RNC through treaties with the Caliph and emirs. However Lugard, in 1901, ordered for the registration of the RNC “lands” and Proclamation Number 16 of 1902 divided land in the region into Crown and Public lands.<sup>113</sup> Crown lands included all mineral lands and lands that were “granted” to the RNC and public lands covered those that the local chiefs administered through customary laws. These lands were, according to Lugard, preserved for the “natives” and no European firm was allowed to use them to engage in agricultural production. In 1913, the colonial administration introduced the Land Acquisition Proclamation that gave the government the right to the freehold of lands that were required for “public purposes.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Freund, *Capital and Labour*, p.40.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, p.41.

<sup>112</sup> Lugard, *Dual Mandate*, pp.294-300.

<sup>113</sup> PRO CO 16701: Land (amendment) Draft Proclamation, 1905; PRO CO 32218: Proclamation 11 1906 “Land Amendments.”

<sup>114</sup> NAK SNP 9 1147/1914 Northern Nigeria Annual Report, 1913.

The proclamation gave the government the power to determine or define what the public interest was, in relation to the required land. This meant that requests for land, either for mining or for the establishment of churches, had to be approved by the colonial government.<sup>115</sup> Similar to the land proclamations were the Mineral Proclamations that affected the mining communities of Akwanga. These Mineral Proclamations made provisions for mining leaseholders to pay landowners an amount of money, which was fixed by the colonial government and the former were to compensate the latter for any damage to either crops or buildings.<sup>116</sup> Despite these provisions, the government did little or nothing to prevent mining companies from felling trees. They also did not ensure trees were replanted and as a consequence this source of fuel became more expensive for both the mining companies and the local communities.<sup>117</sup> Deforestation also had an adverse effect on the mining communities in terms of soil erosion. The colonial land policy for mining purposes stipulated that the holders of a mining lease may, without holding a right of occupancy, disturb crops, demolish buildings and growing timber and generally do anything on the surface of the land necessary for the conduct of mining operations.<sup>118</sup>

Demand for land by the mining companies was far greater and more aggressive in Bukuru and Jos than in Akwanga.<sup>119</sup> The scramble for land in Jos division resulted in the Berom people being ejected from their lands and their crops being destroyed without any compensation, although the government maintained that compensation was to be paid at a

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<sup>115</sup> Going through the archival records in Kaduna, especially SNP11, M Series has hundreds of such applications for land permits by either the mining companies or the Missions and also private individuals.

<sup>116</sup> Bower, "Mining Industry," p.7.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> See KIL Microfilm Box 985: Mineral Proclamations of Northern Nigeria, 1902-1904.

<sup>119</sup> See Freund, *Capital and Labour* and Bower, "Mining Industry," for detailed discussion on the conditions of the Birom people regarding the effect of tin mining on their land and livelihood.

rate of £2 per acre.<sup>120</sup> The government was alarmed by the amount of land demanded by European mining companies and, as a result, allocated one hundred acres to the indigenous miners.<sup>121</sup> Soon, such concessions were translated into money payments of £26-10s per annum for local miners. These payments however, never reached local miners and they were forced to abandon their livelihoods. It should be noted that Akwanga was a subsidiary to the dominant mining companies operating in Jos division and only parts of the division were directly affected by tin mining. The communities that were most affected were Marmara, Ninkada, Rafin Tabo, Barkin Teacher, Barkin Waja, and Gungo. Although tin mining had great impact on the economy of Akwanga by creating a market for foodstuffs, which transformed the economy of the local people; the impact of mining was linked with ecological deterioration, which in turn intensified pressure on agricultural production.<sup>122</sup> Extensive deforestation, partly caused by mining companies and mine labourers, led to erosion at Ninkada, Marmara and Rafin Tabo, which destroyed farmlands. Worse still, the land where tin mining took place was the most fertile and farmers of the villages affected were forced to farm in infertile lands. This was in addition to a higher rate of taxation, which as we have already seen in the previous chapter, was higher in Wamba district. As a result, some of the local people were forced to abandon their farms altogether and work in the mines as labourers in order to earn money.<sup>123</sup>

The direct expropriation of land for mining purposes was only one of the new forces putting pressure on agriculture within the mining communities in Akwanga. Colonial legislation made all land in northern Nigeria the property of the crown, thus, the peoples of

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<sup>120</sup> Bower, "Mining Industry," p.14.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

<sup>122</sup> The impact of tin mining on the economy of Akwanga has already been discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, 28 February 2004.

the region had no right either to forbid mining nor bargain for compensation under the Mineral Ordinance of 1916. As Freund argued, even where compensations were paid, the mining companies usually made their arrangements without any recourse to administrative adjudication.<sup>124</sup> The mining companies and the government did not take the issue of land compensation seriously until in late 1940s. In 1945, it was claimed that the “general attitude of the mining community can best be described as one of injured innocence and passive resistance to the settlement of just claims.”<sup>125</sup> However, cash compensation was no substitute for the land which would have given the farmer, and his children after him, a permanent means of livelihood. Even when, in 1950, compensation rose to £32 an acre, cash was difficult for an illiterate farmer to invest, and much of it was frittered away.<sup>126</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Labour in the colonial period was acquired and controlled through the intimately linked policies of taxation, colonial law and policing, thus provoking resentment from local people. The recruitment of labour for the execution of colonial projects had an effect on the agricultural sector, as the withdrawal of productive labour affected food production in the region. When farmers were hit by a natural disaster after the construction of the railway, a lack of surpluses stored from previous farming seasons resulted in food shortages. Furthermore, colonial legislation regarding the lease of lands for mining purposes added to the pressure on agricultural production. Fertile lands in the Wamba region were taken over for tin mining without due compensation for the local farmers and, even in 1945 when the government began to pay compensation, this was not commensurate with the losses suffered

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<sup>124</sup> Freund, *Labour and Capital*, p.159.

<sup>125</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2/26/12601: Plateau Province, Annual Report, 1945.

<sup>126</sup> NAK Jos Prof 27/2057: Plateau Province, Annual Report, 1950.

by the local farmers and their families. In addition, mining had environmental consequences on the land as it caused erosion. The government did not take this issue seriously until after the Second World War, which was, by then, too late to make any significant difference.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER IN AKWANGA, 1926-1955**

The aim of the chapter is to explore how the peoples of Akwanga responded to Christianity and Islam and how they adapted to the changes brought by these faiths during the colonial period. The Akwanga region became a hunting ground for both Christian and Muslim missionaries seeking converts to their respective religions. Since the local religions did not seek converts outside their kinship groups, the two world religions were left to compete for prospective converts. Missionaries of these two religions engaged in theological debates that were centered around rituals for the worship of God and the nature of Christ and Mohammed as proclaimed mediators with God. However, the open support during the 1950s of the Northern Regional Government to the spread of Islam took religious encounter to a different level. Christian missionaries started a propaganda war with Islam, which had political and social implications in the region. The events of the 1950s also triggered the development of self-rule in the local churches, which then became a political network for Christians struggling against Muslim domination.

#### **ISLAM DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, Islam came to Akwanga in the mid nineteenth century through Nunku in the northern part of the division and Muslim clerics

played an important role in the spread of the new faith in the district. Regarding Mada traditional religion, Norton-Traill, the Divisional Officer of Jama'a in 1913 observed that: "the Mada...believes in one God inhabiting the sky, who is all good and all powerful...this idea of one God was not as far as could be ascertained a modern idea introduced perchance by some wandering Mohammedans."<sup>1</sup> However, Islam did not penetrate other parts of the division until after the establishment of colonial rule. Islam made its first leap in the central and western parts of Akwanga when, in 1905, the jurisdiction of the emirs of Keffi, Lafia and Jama'a was extended to the region. This was followed by the appointment of Bashayi, a Fulani as District Head over the Mada and Eggon people in the central district of Akwanga in 1913. In the creation of native administrative structures, the government employed the Hausa-Fulani, who were mostly Muslims, to take charge of the various departments of the Native Administration at the divisional headquarters in Wamba. Therefore, Muslim influence began to be felt amongst the peoples of Akwanga, as observed by one colonial official in 1914:

It can hardly be doubted that the practice of placing large numbers of pagans under Fulani District Head and supporting the authority of these by the powers of government when and where necessary led to an extension of Islam...The pagan headman tended to start wearing Muslim dress especially when they were called into meetings at the District Headquarters and this donning of the garb of the Muslim often proved that first step to Islam.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PRO CO 959/2: Captain H.L Norton Traill Correspondence, 1913; NAK SNP 10/706p: H.L. Norton-Traill to Resident Nasarawa, July 1913.

<sup>2</sup> NAK SNP 9/820: Mada District, Plateau Province - Administration of, 1914.



The first Rindre and Kantana men in Wamba district to be converted to Islam were *malam* Mohammed Kore and Mohammed Waya respectively. According Yusuf Maikano:

Islam was introduced to us at Wamba by Mohammed [Kore]. In those days, Lafia emirate paid their taxes here [Wamba] and the emir's representatives, who were Muslims, usually brought it with them. These Muslims from Lafia introduced Mohammed to Islam and soon afterwards those that were close to him were converted. Majority of the people refused to join Islam and remained pagans.<sup>3</sup>

At the early stage of its development in Wamba, Islam was confined to the District Head Mohammed Kore and his close associates, who played a major role in the spread of Islam in the surrounding villages. In the village of Kantana, it was Mohammed Waya who introduced the local people to Islamic influence. According to an informant:

Mohammed Waya, a man from Kpara, who was converted to Islam in Lafia, introduced Islam into Kantana. He was fond of using scent so we ran away from him because his body smelt and when we saw him with white clothes we also ran away from him. But later some people joined him because he was neatly dressed...the elders refused to join.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Yusuf Maikano at Wamba, 22 March 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Interview at Kantana with Adamu Sale, 3 April 2004.

The elders in Kantana were hostile to Islam when it was first introduced. However, the adaptability of Islam to local customs meant that new converts were able to worship *baku* (ancestor spirits) and Allah at the same time.<sup>5</sup> Gradually, a few people began to become interested in the new religion.

One of the reasons behind the spread of Islam in Akwanga during the colonial period was the *Pax Britannica*. British law and order gave great impetus to the expansion of Islam by facilitating the movements of Islamic agents. During the colonial period, Muslim traders could enter any settlement in the region without fear, for British justice would clamp down hard on any village that murdered such strangers. For example, in 1928, two Eggon men were sentenced to death for killing a Hausa man to serve as a deterrent to their kinsmen.<sup>6</sup> With their security guaranteed, Muslim traders began to take their goods into the hills and come into contact with the local people. The exposure of Eggon people to Islam was gradual and it began by the adoption of Muslim names. According to an informant, Abdul Ebuga: "when I was born, a Hausa trader that came to the hills asked my parents to call me Abdul, and they did. Some people also began to change their names and that was how some of them became Muslims."<sup>7</sup> Exposure to Islam as a consequence of British rule was not particular to the Eggon people. Meek has observed similar trends throughout northern Nigeria in 1925:

By the opening of communications pagans and Muslims are coming into contact...(the pagan) soon realizes the narrowness of his own religion compared to the universality of Islam...this belief in evil spirits is not affected by his outward change of faith. He finds too that

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Sir Rex Niven, *Nigerian Kaleidoscope: Memoirs of a Colonial Servant* (London, 1982), p.106.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 23 March 2004.

the Muslims are tolerant and they have better houses, better clothes, and a better knowledge of the world than he.<sup>8</sup>

Colonial rule in Akwanga also gave opportunities to the Hausa-Fulani to work at the tin mines in Wamba and for employment in the central administration. Tin mining played an important role in the Islamisation of the peoples of Akwanga. Some of the local labour migrants to the mines from other districts of the division became separated from the rituals and structures of their religions. They felt lost because their traditional religion could not offer adequate rationale of life in their new environment. Additionally, they felt socially excluded and as a consequence became vulnerable. One of my informants, Allahnana, observed:

When we came to work at the mines in Marmara, we became isolated from our kinsmen, but found ourselves working with Muslims and under a Muslim overseer. At work we discovered that a Muslim overseer tended to favour his fellow Muslim and when we returned home, we decided not only to become Muslims, but also persuade our family to convert to Islam.<sup>9</sup>

Conversion to Islam was simple. Muslims attracted non-Muslims by practical offers and made few initial demands on them for cultural renunciation, but they also knew how vital it was to keep up preaching to the converted. According to Alhaji Salihu, the would-be convert turned to a *malam* for the necessary ritual, which was brief and

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<sup>8</sup> Meek, *Northern Tribes*, p.8.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Muhammadu Allahnana at Marmara, 22 May 2003.

superficial, consisting only in memorising a few *surat* (verses) of the Koran. This was followed by a declaration of faith during a service in the mosque.<sup>10</sup> After the completion of the ritual, the new convert was given a turban as a visible sign of the conversion. The observances of Muslim rituals followed by the peoples of Akwanga were as simple as the procedure of conversion. The basic duties of Muslims – bearing witness to one God; reciting the five daily prayers; giving alms; observing the fast and making the pilgrimage to Mecca – were for most people in the region reduced to two, daily prayer and fasting.<sup>11</sup> Pilgrimage to Mecca was practically impossible because the few converts could not afford to travel to the holy land; bearing witness and reciting of the Koran was also difficult because the local converts had no in-depth knowledge of the new religion.<sup>12</sup>

## THE SUM AND THE CONVERSION OF THE “PAGANS” OF CENTRAL NIGERIA

Christian missionary activities in northern Nigeria began in the late nineteenth century with the activities of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). In 1892, the Hausa Association was formed in Britain in memory of J.A. Robinson, whose brother Cannon Robinson was sent to learn Hausa in the Hausa community in Tripoli in 1893. In 1894, he went to Lokoja and later spent three months in Kano. He reported back in 1895 about the readiness of the Hausa to receive the missionaries. Cannon Robinson, like other missionaries of his time, were of the assumption that the Hausa, some of whom were literate, were capable of understanding the “metaphysical truths” of Christianity. It was hoped that once the Hausa accepted the new religion, they would help to spread it to “the

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Alhaji Idirisu at Gudi, 14 March 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Yusuf Maikano at Wamba, 22 March 2004.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

less healthy and less enlightened parts of the continent.”<sup>13</sup> The CMS began to prepare to send missionaries into northern Nigeria and in 1898, a number of missionaries were sent again to Tripoli to study Hausa. In 1895, Bishop Tugwell had made an exploratory journey to Bida and the following year he visited Keffi, where the emir had said that he would welcome the missionaries.<sup>14</sup> On his return to England, he met with Lugard in London and requested his support as the newly appointed High Commissioner of northern Nigeria. Lugard agreed to support them but advised the missionaries not to go into areas where the government could not guarantee them appropriate security.<sup>15</sup>

The missionaries who left England under the direction of Bishop Tugwell were Dr. Miller, Burgin, Ryder and Richardson. When they arrived in Lokoja, Lugard informed them of the security situation and advised that they should only go as far as Daba (a town about a hundred miles from Bida). They however, by-passed Daba deciding to continue their journey into the heart of Hausaland and were welcomed at Zaria en route to Kano. The emir of Zaria, Kwassau, provided the missionaries with accommodation and insisted that they should stay in the town. Although the gesture of the emir was politically motivated, the missionaries accepted it and later advised him to submit to the British authority, which would guarantee his throne and his subsequent survival in the new dispensation.<sup>16</sup>

The success the missionaries had in Zaria gave them the confidence to head for Kano, which was the largest Hausa city. They were however denied access into the city

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<sup>13</sup> E.A. Ayandele, “The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria, 1870-1918,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3 (1966), p.504.

<sup>14</sup> E.P.T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1975), p.37.

<sup>15</sup> This became a major problem later between Lugard and Bishop Tugwell, as the former did not honour his part of the agreement.

<sup>16</sup> Church Missionary Society (hereafter CMS) G3/A9/O1: Miller to Baylis, 18 February 1902.

and were taken to meet the emir, Aliyu outside the city walls. They were humiliated and ordered to remove their shoes and stockings and were not allowed to look at the emir in face. They were told by the emir that the Koran had everything they desired to have and they were subsequently ordered to leave Kano within two days.<sup>17</sup> After their expulsion from Kano they came through Zaria and the emir who had earlier welcomed them now became hostile, but reluctantly allowed them to settle at Girku to the south. The mission to Kano was, according to Miller, a colossal blunder.<sup>18</sup> It became obvious for the missionaries that the conversion of the Hausa-Fulani was not to be as easy as they thought. Lugard advised that they should concentrate their energies instead on the “pagan” peoples of central Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> He was anxious not to offend the emirs, who were the integral part of his indirect rule system. The desire of the Christian missionaries to evangelise the “pagans” in central Nigeria in order to counter the expansion of Islam led to the formation of the Sudan United Mission (SUM), which dominated missionary activities in Akwanga.

The SUM was founded in 1904. One of its leaders was Grattan Guinness, who edited a magazine designed to promote interest in mission to Africa. According to Boer, Guinness and the other evangelicals were alarmed by the fact that Africa was in imminent danger of becoming a Muslim continent.<sup>20</sup> According to the head of the SUM, Karl Kumm, the reason for the founding of the mission was “to counteract the Moslem advance among the pagan tribes in the Benue region. This cannot be done by going to

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<sup>17</sup> CMS. G3/A9/O1: Richardson to Baylis, 26 July 1900; PRO C.O. 446/7: Lugard to Colonial Office, 1899 and PRO CO 446/14: Lugard To Colonial Office, 27 February 1901.

<sup>18</sup> W. Miller, *Reflections of a Pioneer* (London, 1936), p.13.

<sup>19</sup> CMS. G3/A9/O1: Memo of interview with Lugard, 23 July 1906.

<sup>20</sup> J.H. Boer, *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* (Ibadan, 1984), p.32.

the Mohammedans, and therefore our work will lie among the pagan tribes.”<sup>21</sup> The mission appealed to the public for at least 150 missionaries to be placed in some 50 stations along the southern frontier of and it was hoped that for each tribe “at least three white missionaries, a medical man, an ordained educationist” could be found.<sup>22</sup>

In 1904, a party of three missionaries was sent to Tripoli to study Hausa. While at Tripoli, Kumm’s attention was drawn by the Resident of Bauchi province, Mr. Temple, to “a great Plateau with comparatively healthy country with a large population of pagans” as a suitable location for his proposed mission.<sup>23</sup> In order to raise the funds necessary for the mission, Mrs. Lucy Kumm wrote an impassioned open letter to British Christians, appealing to them to back the missionary adventure. “We plead for the neglected millions of the Sudan,” she wrote; “give yourself to the tremendous task of evangelising at last this greatest and most populous of all the wholly neglected regions of the surface of the globe.”<sup>24</sup> Lucy’s letter resulted in the SUM council collecting £550, which was to provide for three men for the mission and the first year’s expenses.<sup>25</sup> Drawing from the experience of the failure of the CMS party at Kano, the SUM missionaries were not permitted by their council to “go forward blindly” and were warned not to be “ignorant of what serious developments might lie ahead.”<sup>26</sup> The first party of the SUM left Liverpool on 23 July 1904 under the leadership of Dr. Karl Kumm, with Dr. Ambrose Bateman, John Burt and John Lowry Maxwell.<sup>27</sup> They were commissioned to undertake an expedition of investigation and commence work in

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<sup>21</sup> K. Kumm, *From Hausaland to Egypt through the Sudan* (London, 1910), p.41.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> J.L. Maxwell, *Half a Century of Grace: A Jubilee History of the Sudan United Mission* (Belfast, 1952), p.26.

<sup>24</sup> *Facing the Challenge: Sudan United Mission to Action Partners, 1904-2004* (Doncaster, 2004), p.4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.26.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-10.

Bauchi province. Their intention was to spread Christianity among the Jukun, Yergam, Birom and the freed slaves at Rumasha. Arriving at Lokoja they began their orientation with the assistance of two CMS missionaries while Kumm went to speak with Lugard. Lugard suggested beginning at Wase, which was about halfway between the Benue river and the Bauchi plateau.<sup>28</sup> Lugard also allowed the SUM to import their supplies duty free and in addition granted a reduction in the fares for the missionaries using the government steamers.<sup>29</sup> Wase station lasted until 1909, when it was closed down and Maxwell, writing retrospectively, observed:

I have sometimes thought that it was a pity that we did not, right at the first, settle it in our minds that we would not dig ourselves in anywhere until we had done a good deal more investigation. We were easily brought to follow the suggestion of the High Commissioner, and stay at Wase. If we had looked around us more, we might have done better both for ourselves and for the work which was the reason for our coming to the country at all.<sup>30</sup>

The SUM soon realised the difficulty in carrying out this mission and therefore Kumm engaged himself in an international campaign to recruit missionaries from different countries. He went to the United States, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa and in each of these countries, branches of the SUM were established with its own independent mission in Nigeria. Karl Kumm visited South Africa in 1906 and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.38.

<sup>29</sup> *Lightbearers* (March, 1905), p.8.

<sup>30</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.54.



through his preaching, many people heard the call to the mission's service in Nigeria, including Reverend George Botha of the Dutch Reformed Church and Mr. Vincent Hosking, a member of the Methodist Church. They only arrived in Nigeria the following year as they first went to England to attend a six month course at Livingstone College, before proceeding to Nigeria in 1908.<sup>31</sup> It was the South African branch of the SUM which later dominated missionary activity in Akwanga. The mission became independent and non-denominational, with the different branches working in close relationship with each other but with a high degree of autonomy. The British branch of the SUM served as the coordinator of the whole mission in Nigeria. Although the British branch was responsible for the formation of the organisation, the major reason for its leadership role in Nigeria was simply because the branches were serving in a British colony and therefore, the British branch was in the best position to influence the Colonial Office in London.<sup>32</sup> The SUM also had a close relationship with the Sudan Interior Mission (hereafter SIM), but this "exceedingly desirable coalition was not, however, maintained" and it was discontinued in 1907.<sup>33</sup> Also after its early association with the SUM, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission of South Africa became a separate denominational mission and took charge of the mission amongst the Tiv.

However, some of the South African missionaries that remained in the interdenominational branch of the SUM sought new areas to establish their stations north of the Benue.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Judd visited Akwanga to investigate the possibility of establishing a mission station amongst the Eggon and Mada people, but because of on-

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<sup>31</sup> *The SUM 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee, 1904-1979* (Tunbridge Wells, 1980), p.22.

<sup>32</sup> J.H. Boer, *Missionaries Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Sudan United Mission* (Amsterdam, 1979), p.116.

<sup>33</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.62.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.23.

going security problems the area was closed to any European enterprise. A temporary station was opened in 1917 at Keana to work amongst the Arago. Some of the missionaries did occasionally visit Akwanga to preach, despite misgivings on the parts of colonial officials. In 1922, Arden-Clarke wrote to his parents: "The general attitude of the government is not sympathetic to the missions out here...the type of man sent out as a missionary is very often not the right sort. They don't seem to try and understand the native mind."<sup>35</sup> Some government officials were not keen on the influence of the missionaries because of the bad effect they were seen to have on the peoples' moral character following conversion to Christianity. Arden-Clarke, for instance, observed that they become "undisciplined and a general nuisance to the community."<sup>36</sup> He gave an example of how four missionaries had set up a stall in a village market and started telling the story of the cross in English, which resulted in local people thinking they were mad.<sup>37</sup> The people of the area did not understand English, which made it difficult for the missionaries to convey their message of salvation. Arden-Clarke suggested that instead of sending out twenty poorly paid and unsuitable missionaries, a few really good men should be selected and be trained in simple medicine for twelve months and then be equipped properly before leaving.

The restriction imposed on European enterprise in Akwanga was finally lifted in 1926. In that year the region was finally opened up for European ventures, Keana station was abandoned and the mission workers were moved "onwards to grasp the greater opportunity" amongst the Eggon people of the southern part of Akwanga.<sup>38</sup> Reverend

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<sup>35</sup> Letter of Arden-Clarke to parents 15 May 1922

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.158.

Hepburn established the first mission station in Akwanga in 1926 at the heart of the Eggon hills in Wana district. However, before the full evangelization of the Eggon people began, it was necessary to win their confidence and the missionaries started this process by visiting them in their homes, treating the sick and offering a home for those suffering from leprosy during the long period of their treatment.<sup>39</sup> The Eggon people were, however, reluctant to accept the missionaries amongst them. The elders were concerned about their children being taught bad manners and becoming disrespectful to the accepted norms of society.<sup>40</sup> The major obstacle to the missionary's conversion effort was their lack of understanding of the Eggon way of life. One of the robust prejudices according to an informant, Laka Bako, was the description of the leaders of the *ashim* cult as "deceivers of the people," which was in addition to the insistence by the missionaries that would-be converts must abandon their traditional religion, which they dismissed as "paganism" and "devil worship."<sup>41</sup> The total rejection of local belief systems by the missionaries made their work harder. Religion permeated into all aspects of the peoples' lives, so that it was not possible always to isolate it and for people to suddenly change their ways of life.<sup>42</sup> The SUM church at Wana was not as successful as the missionaries expected and up to the 1930s, the church did not expand or establish any out-station beyond the Eggon district. By 1932, after six year's toil, the SUM only claimed one convert and there was no sign of the mission's influence on local customs.<sup>43</sup> In 1935, the missionaries admitted that the mission work at Wana was "different from

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Adigizi Musa at Wowa, 26 February 2004.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Laka Bako at Ahgbor, 13 March 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Reverend Mari at Alushi, 20 May 2003.

<sup>43</sup> NAK Jos Prof 44/1932: Southern Division Report on for 1931-32.

other districts; older people were more willing to accept than younger people.”<sup>44</sup> The positive response by some the elders towards the new faith was more to do with their physical needs being met by the missionaries. The Eggon people had one of the largest numbers of people suffering from leprosy in the region and this disease affected mostly elderly people. Leprosy treatment provided by the missionaries became the major attraction for some of the elders, who received medical attention and care.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, their tolerable attitude towards the new religion was a direct result of the tangible medical benefits they were getting by associating with the missionaries.



**Figure 6.1:** The grave of Reverend Hepburn at the Eggon hills

<sup>44</sup> Pamphlet: “Fifty Years in the Church of the Mada Hills: 1916-1966,” Church of Christ in the Sudan, Mada Hills Region. (no date).

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Rev. Mari at Alushi, 10 May 2004.

One of the major difficulties in converting younger Eggon to Christianity was the consistent attack by the missionaries on polygamy, which was central to the organisation of social and economic life. Polygamy was the one institution that the missionaries refused to compromise on.<sup>46</sup> Arden-Clarke observed that unless the missionaries changed their approach towards polygamy, "Christianity will be knocked out by Mohammedanism" in Akwanga.<sup>47</sup> The insistence on the part of the missionaries that early converts abandon all except their senior wives did not go down well with local men. As Islam did not attack polygamy (even where this involved more than four wives) many people found Islam more attractive than Christianity.<sup>48</sup> According to Mr. Ames, monogamy and the permanence of Christian marriage were the greatest stumbling blocks to their conversion work.<sup>49</sup> He maintained that the "polygamy of paganism is an institution which is based on social economics and the arithmetical impossibility for all to be polygamists may have been the cause of the relative impermanence of its marriage bonds."<sup>50</sup> Economically, with high infant mortality, there was the need for multiple wives to ensure a large number of children, who in turn would ensure adequate productivity by the family. The early success of the missionaries working amongst the Eggon appears to have been more to do with the provision of physical needs than the conviction in people's hearts. The major attraction of the mission was the hospital and the SUM established the first dispensary amongst the Eggon people in 1926. The news of its success in curing sicknesses soon spread around the villages, which attracted

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<sup>46</sup> E. Smith, *The Christian Mission in Nigeria* (London, 1924), p.51.

<sup>47</sup> Arden-Clarke to parents 15 May 1922.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Baba Maluku at Nasarawa Eggon, 2 April 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.310.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

people to visit the mission station.<sup>51</sup> The mission hospitals were a great success, as acknowledged by Ames:

It was through their medical work that the missions have achieved their greatest success and I cannot express too strongly and sincerely my intense admiration for the relief and comfort they must have brought to thousands of sick and suffering the past twenty years or more.<sup>52</sup>

In the northern part of Akwanga, a mission station was established amongst the Mada people in the late 1930s. Before the SUM established its station at Wana, there were European missionaries at Randa in Jama'a division, but they did not usually visit the district except to entrain at Gudi. There were however two small churches, one Church Missionary Society (CMS) and a Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), which were built by the railway labourers at Gudi.<sup>53</sup> The early Christian converts among the Mada people were those that attended the mission school or dispensary at Randa. In May 1928, one Kado from the village of Ancho Babba and Chujama from Ungwar Durumi along with six other Mada boys were accepted at the SUM school in Randa. In May 1931, Chujama converted to Christianity and was baptized by one of the missionaries.<sup>54</sup> Chujama began to preach to his kinsmen with some success. The missionaries at Randa were unaware of the development of a Christian community amongst the Mada people and it came as a surprise as none of them "had known that such work existed in any

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<sup>51</sup> Interviews with Tsaku Musa, Abliku Gabi and Kuje Kigbu at Angbaku, 1 March 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Ames, *Plateau Province*, p.312.

<sup>53</sup> NAK Jos Prof 45/1930: Akwanga Division Annual Report for Year, 1929.

<sup>54</sup> Fifty Years in the Church, pp.12-13.

North Mada village, but there it was.”<sup>55</sup> Chujama was successful in his mission and even converted a man and his wife.<sup>56</sup> When Mr. Judd from Randa visited the village for the first time, Chujama organised a gathering of the people to listen to him preach. Quoting Mr. Judd, Maxwell wrote:

The chief, the elders and many of the adult population gathered round a large tree, and Chujama placed his band of ‘seekers’ to the right of this tree...Then he stepped out before the people, said a few words, and lifted his right hand. As he sway [sic] his arm to and fro, sixty or seventy boys and girls sang...in Hausa and then Mada. It was lovely to hear them, and to see the joy in their faces.<sup>57</sup>

The SUM opened a mission station amongst the Mada, which was started by a medical work at Ancho in November 1937. The opening of a mission station at Ancho followed in April 1938 and a church was opened with 83 in the congregation including the village head of Rija.<sup>58</sup> This does not suggest however, that the missionaries and their new religion were widely accepted.<sup>59</sup> The general apathy of the people towards the new religion meant that those attending the church were mostly from Ungwar Durumi, where Chujama started his mission. Some of the surrounding villages living close to the new mission station at Ancho refused to attend any of the activities organised by the missionaries.

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<sup>55</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.170.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Fifty Years in the Church*, p.17.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, with Reverend Amin Zaigi, at Akwanga, 2 March 2004.



**Figure 6.2:** A new church built on the foundations of an earlier one by Reverend Hepburn in 1926

Missionary activities in Akwanga in general began to expand in the late 1930s, by which time there were four different missionary societies working in different locations in the area. They were the SUM, the RCM, the Methodist Mission and the CMS.<sup>60</sup> In October 1938, Reverend Fathers Andrew Geraghty and Michael Harrison were sent to explore the possibility of establishing a Catholic mission station in Akwanga region. They visited the southern part of the division and received permission from Mr. Hall, the District Officer, to open a mission station if the chief of Eggon agreed.<sup>61</sup> He did so and they were granted two sites in Odeigi Kasa and Alogani. The District Officer did not receive any objection from the SUM to the fact that another missionary group was coming into its area of influence.<sup>62</sup> In March 1939 both sites had houses built and priests appointed to them. The mission station at Odeigi Kasa was not

<sup>60</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2282: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1937.

<sup>61</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4825: Southern Division Half and Yearly Report, 1940.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*



successful because the local people were suspicious of the priests and refused to have any contact with them, which resulted in the closure of the mission station in April 1940.<sup>63</sup> The missionaries therefore concentrated their efforts in Alogani and the mission arranged for two Irish nurses, Jane Powell and Angela d'Arcy to set up a dispensary near the station. The dispensary was opened in July 1939 and within a few days, the local people came in large numbers for treatment.<sup>64</sup> However, the nurses were not mentally prepared to work in their new environment and therefore returned to Ireland in June 1940. The dispensary was eventually closed down due to inadequate supply of medicines.<sup>65</sup> By 1942, the Catholic mission station at Alogani was run by two Reverend Fathers. As observed by the District Officer, "the Eggon have not so far proved a fruitful field for their labours."<sup>66</sup>

As already mentioned, the SUM established their first mission station at the heart of the Eggon hills. However, between 1948 and 1949, the station was moved to the plains at Kagbu. The movement was necessary because most of the people that hitherto settled on the hills for security reasons began to relocate to the plains. According to Maxwell:

It comes to pass that, in the course of a few years, we find that our station up on the hill no longer enables us to reach our people. We have got to go where they are on the plain. So, though we have made our home comfortable and our garden beautiful up among the hills, down we must come to the

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<sup>63</sup> Roman Catholic Mission (hereafter RCM) Diary, Alogani/Alushi 1940.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4825: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report, 1942.

lowland, and start anew among our people there. The preacher must be in touch with his people.<sup>67</sup>

## **RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER: CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM AND COLONIAL RULE IN AKWANGA**

As already mentioned, Christianity came to Akwanga later than Islam and thus, Islam and indigenous systems of beliefs had interacted for a longer time. During the colonial period, there was competition between Islam and Christianity to win converts and the benefits of these world religions were presented to the peoples of Akwanga, considered a vast reserve of potential converts. Islam was more responsive to local culture. The Islam encountered by the European missionaries in Akwanga was already heavily mixed with traditional practices. Christian missionaries perceived Islam in a negative way according to lower status than Christianity. According to Maxwell:

It [Islam] denies human ability...It brings its followers a book which it claims is God's own word, it enjoins an ordered set of observances, and a picturesque worship-ceremony. It makes no embarrassing moral demands, and sanctions slavery and polygamy...It exalts Mohammed, its founder, to a place of honour and dignity away beyond that accorded to any other human being, and teaches men to look for his intercession on the day of judgement...It knows nothing of a quickening, sanctifying and

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<sup>67</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.279.

empowering Holy Spirit. In a word, it neither has, nor believes in, a Gospel which can meet our human need.<sup>68</sup>

There are two important issues raised by Maxwell in his observation of Islam which became central in the encounter between Christianity and Islam in Akwanga. He mentioned, firstly, that Islam “enjoins an ordered set of observances and a picturesque worship-ceremony” and secondly, that it exalts Mohammed to a place of honour and “teaches men to look for his intercession.” Thus, in their contest for converts in Akwanga, the theological issues raised in the debates between Christians and Muslims were the rituals for the worship of God and the nature of Christ and Mohammed as proclaimed mediators with God. Islam emphasised the ritual importance of being clean through *alwala* (ritual ablution before prayer) in approaching God, while Christians maintained that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, had the power to cleanse mankind clean without any specific ritual. Ritual purification was an important theme that both Christians and Muslims wanted to present to their audience, but Islam had an advantage over Christianity on the aspect of religious ritual. As described in Chapter 1, the spirits of the ancestors were approached through rituals that were conducted by the heads of the cults and although Muslim *alwala* was different, it served the same purpose.

Ritual purification was not the major factor that attracted peoples of Akwanga to Islam, in the conversion efforts by the Muslim missionaries. However, according to an informant, Alhaji Yusuf, “some of us joined Islam because it is a religion of purity and because Allah is holy, we must approach him in a pure way, which involves the

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<sup>68</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.32.

*alwala*.”<sup>69</sup> The theme of cleanliness as a condition of the heart was the standard Christian missionary response to Muslim promotion of their rituals and prayer. According to Reverend Mantani:

When I first gave my life to Christ, the constant argument with my Muslim friends was that our religion was not pure. What they failed to understand was that we Christians are more concerned with our inward purity not what we can do to show our fellow men that we are clean. God required a pure heart, not outward ceremony as being promoted by Islam.<sup>70</sup>

Christianity was presented as an internal religion that was interested in the purity of the heart while Islam was an external or outward religion. Quoting the book of Matthew 15:19, Mantani argued: “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness blasphemies.” Likewise the European missionaries often emphasised the inward “difference” that existed between Christianity and Islam. According to Maxwell:

People just do not realise the terrible gulf that separates the Moslems from the Christians...One could wish they might realise the true inwardness of Islam, that is utterly anti-Christ, and really blasphemous in its misinterpretation of the character of God, setting Him forth as guilty of such abominable cruelty as even an

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Alhaji Yakubu at Andaha, 4 May 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Reverend Mantani Kreni at Akwanga, 22 March 2004.

ordinary decent man, with all his sinfulness, would regard with horror.<sup>71</sup>

The second theological issue raised by Christians and Muslims was that of a mediator. In search for the most effective mediator with God, the Muslims presented Mohammed, while the Christians presented Christ. Both religions presented their mediators as more effective and powerful substitutes for the local spirits of the ancestors who could mediate with the supreme being on their behalf. The Muslims had more positive view of Christ than Christians had of Mohammed. Christians considering Mohammed a “false prophet,” while the Muslims regarded Christ as *anabi Isa* “Prophet Jesus.”

However, Christianity had one distinct advantage: it could put forward a more elevated view of Christ, as God incarnate, than Islam did of Mohammed. Christian evangelists made the most of Christ’s supernatural conception and of the miracles described in the Gospels. The Christian missionaries used the miracles performed by Christ as written in the Gospels as evidence of the powerfulness and effectiveness of Jesus as God incarnate. The healing of the sick, the waking of the dead, walking on the sea and the miracle of feeding the thousands were all used by Christians when engaging with Muslims. The popular song that brings home the message of Christ’s healing powers in Akwanga was: “*Wani iri mutun ne Yesu...ya warka da makafai, yar tada matatu*” (what kind of a man is Jesus...He healed the blind, He has woken the dead).<sup>72</sup> Some people in Akwanga were clearly converted to Christianity because of the healing

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<sup>71</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.222.

<sup>72</sup> This song came in an interview, with Reverend Mari at Alushi, 3 April 2004.

powers that Christ possessed. According to Sidi Tide, “I joined Christianity because I knew that my problems would be solved by Jesus alone, who has the power to heal me. I was a sick person before I became Christian, but after I accepted Jesus Christ in my life I was healed.”<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that the healing powers of Jesus were boosted by the medical work provided by the Christian missionaries, which was considered part of the religion. However, no religion was very good at or obviously better than any of the others dealing with the most intractable illness. They claimed to offer healing and tried to persuade the local public that the apparent success was due to their privileged relations with the divine. All the religions offered healing to their audience and people wanted to believe them; but no religion seemed able to offer decisive proof of its power. Generally, when strengths of Islam and Christianity are compared as religions competing for “local” favour, one factor seems to stand out on each side. For Islam it was the appeal of the spiritual techniques of the *malams* – prayers and charms – while for Christianity, it was the appeal of Christ as mediator.

The competition to convert the peoples of Akwanga was a challenge the European missionaries took very seriously. Maxwell asked: “who was to win, Christ or Mohammed? The question pressed for an adequate and immediate answer. Cross or Crescent? Which shall prevail?”<sup>74</sup> The answer is that the vast majority of the population in the region did not become Christians or Muslims but remained predominantly attached to their own beliefs. It should be noted that the number of Muslim converts was negligible in relation to the non-Muslim population, but significantly higher than the Christians. The number of Muslims was in the hundreds (including the Hausa-Fulani

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with Sidi Tide, 20 November 2003.

<sup>74</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.33.

immigrants that settled in the area), but certainly less than one per cent of the total population of the division.<sup>75</sup> As already mentioned in the preceding section, there were less than five Christian converts amongst the Eggon by 1945 and in addition, the number of Mada converts by 1947 was only 46, out of a population of over 50,000; that is less than one tenth of 1 per cent of the total population of the district.<sup>76</sup> The picture for the whole Plateau province, which was the stronghold of the SUM was not encouraging either. By 1953, only 3.3 per cent of the inhabitants of the province had been converted to the Christian faith.<sup>77</sup>

One advantage Islam had over Christianity was the free association of Muslims with the non-Muslim population in Akwanga. Muslims associated themselves freely with the “pagans” while “Christians were regarded as a people separate from them. An informant, Reverend Akawu Mako, best captures the Christian attitude towards non-Muslims and Muslims in Akwanga: “*menene ya hada duhu da haske?*” (what is the relationship between light and darkness).<sup>78</sup> Christians saw their religion as the light of the world while both Muslims and non-Muslims were living in “darkness” and dwelling amongst the “unbelievers” was to be avoided.<sup>79</sup>

The lack of progress by the European missionaries created tension between Christian missions and the colonial government. The European missionaries accused the government of hindering their work while at the same time encouraging the spread of Islam. The major problem that the Christian missions claimed to be facing in northern

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<sup>75</sup> From the rough estimates collected in the districts, my informants put the number of Muslims in the 1930s and 1940s to between two to eight hundred. However, there is no way of confirming or dismissing the claims. Therefore, it will be safer to put the number in hundreds, considering the majority of the Nunku clan were Muslims and couple of dozens in Wamba and Gudi.

<sup>76</sup> Interview, with Rev. Mantani Kreni at Akwanga, 2 April 2004.

<sup>77</sup> Ayandele, *Missionary Impact*, p.345.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Reverend Akawu Mako at Akwanga, 15 January 2004.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

Nigeria was that the government imposed restrictions on their work. The position of the Christian missionaries is summarised by Maxwell:

The writer cannot refrain from expressing his regret that a British Government should have so promoted and protected Islam in Nigeria that it had found an entry into hundreds of communities where it never had a footing before the Union Jack lent it its protection. Why should the propagation of Christianity be blocked and forbidden, and that too by the representatives of a nominally Christian nation?<sup>80</sup>

Throughout the colonial period, there was continued friction between the missionaries and the colonial government on the issue of restrictions to missionary work in parts of northern Nigeria. Even amongst the communities in central Nigeria, the colonial government was cautious about the influence of the missionaries. In 1911, Hesketh Bell, the Governor of Northern Provinces wrote to the Colonial Office:

It is to be feared that the spread of the elements of Christianity among the pagans in this country will, at first, create many difficulties, and will certainly tend to weaken the influence of those chiefs who are not prepared to follow the teachings of the missionary. There will be a tendency among converts to pay more attention to the advice of the white missionary than to the orders of their own rulers, and it is to hoped that those who are engaged

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<sup>80</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.253.



in mission work will detach themselves, as much as possible, from interference in local secular affairs.<sup>81</sup>

The restriction of mission work, especially among Muslims, was considered as the greatest obstacle the missions were facing in northern Nigeria. At a conference in Lokoja in 1910, the missions passed a resolution that on the basis of the principle of religious tolerance, it was the right of a people to choose their own religion. This implied that the missionaries must be free to preach without restrictions wherever people were ready to listen.<sup>82</sup> In the 1920s, the colonial administration, especially during the Governorship of Palmer (1925-1931) restricted missionary work in central Nigeria mainly on the grounds that the missions had carved out areas for themselves larger than they could serve adequately. According to Farrant, this was an attempt by the colonial government to divert missions from the Muslim provinces. He argued that the mission “deliberately leaves stretches of country between its main stations so that a field for evangelism will be available when there are converts” and “the unoccupied spaces of today are fields of food for the church tomorrow.”<sup>83</sup> However, he also blamed the missionaries for being too soft and patient towards government restrictions and he predicted that “whereas in the past the attitude of the mission has been conciliatory and yielding, they will now insist on plain rights” and the government had erected a barrier and “we must sweep it away.”<sup>84</sup> Farrant, however, found the restriction imposed on the mission to work amongst the Muslims as “the purpose of God” and in 1933, he wrote

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<sup>81</sup> PRO CO 446/100: Sir Hesketh Bell to Colonial Office; Missionary Work in Nigeria, 1911.

<sup>82</sup> PRO CO 446/105: Missionary Conference held at Lokoja, July 1910; SUM 10: Minutes of Conference in Northern Provinces, Nigeria, 1910-1935.

<sup>83</sup> SUM Records: Farrant to Palmer, 11 September 1928.

<sup>84</sup> SUM: Field Report, 31 December 1929.

that while it is easy to blame the government, "it was the purpose of God to turn the messengers of the Cross first to the pagan and not to the Muslim."<sup>85</sup> He stated that originally, missions in the Sudan were aimed at the Muslim community, but were prevented by the government. Instead, they ended up building Christian community amongst the "pagan" peoples, "kin in race to the Mohammedan tribes."<sup>86</sup> According to him, God prepared such a community "in order that the Mohammedan people should become dissatisfied with what they have and reach out for reconciliation with him through Christ Jesus."<sup>87</sup>

However, the restriction imposed by the colonial government was not the major factor that resulted in the failure of Christian missions in Akwanga. It should be noted that the category of "unsettled district" was lifted in Akwanga in 1926 and by 1935 the SUM could only claim one convert at Wana. Thus, although the government did not restrict their work in the area, their inability to have enough converts or trained local evangelists to further the spread of the new faith to other parts of the region affected the spread of Christianity in Akwanga. Up to 1936, there were only two missionaries for the whole of the Akwanga region and they were unable to establish any out-station. The new church at Ancho was no different either. In Wamba district, the District Head, a Muslim, thwarted any effort by the Christian missionaries to establish their presence in that area.<sup>88</sup>

The European missionaries interpreted the restrictions imposed by the colonial government as an official opposition to the spread of the Christian faith and therefore

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<sup>85</sup> *Lightbearer* (September, 1933), p.101.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> SUM: Field Report, 1937.

<sup>88</sup> Interview at Wamba with Philip Maiangwa, 23 March 2004.

open support for Islam. The SUM field secretary, Mr. Farrant, accused the government of being anti-Christian and guilty of three basic “evils.” The first charge was that the colonial government increased the menace of Islam by supporting its spread. Secondly, the government was accused of perpetuating the separation of Nigeria into two cultural regions by restricting the missionaries in the north while allowing them unlimited access in the south. Lastly, Farrant accused the colonial government of antagonising the Christian church. According to him: “The net result of twenty-nine years of rule by a Government which professes to see a menace in Islam is that by their encouragement and policy there are more Moslems and Islam is better organised and more of a force than when Britain occupied the country in 1900.”<sup>89</sup>

Another major problem that Christianity caused amongst the groups in Akwanga for which the missionaries were blamed was the constant conflict between the adherents of the new faith and the “traditionalists.” This conflict became widespread in Nigeria and a Residents’ conference was summoned to consider the issue in 1935.<sup>90</sup> After being converted to Christianity, many young people refused to recognise the authority of their elders. For example, there was reported friction in some villages of the Mama and Kwara areas between SUM followers and the local inhabitants, a situation that was described by the District Officer as “a problem with no short cut solution.”<sup>91</sup> It started when the local elders demanded obedience to their authority, which included the recognition of *tsafi* (ritual) regarded as an integral part of such authority. The missionaries encouraged their converts to disregard traditional practices. The rejection of

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<sup>89</sup> SUM: Farrant to Oldham, 16 December 1926.

<sup>90</sup> A. Ijagbemi, *Christian Missionary Activity in Colonial Nigeria: The Work of Sudan Interior Mission Among the Yoruba, 1908-1967* (Lagos, 1986), pp.47-48.

<sup>91</sup> NAK Jos Prof 5422: Southern Division, Half Yearly and Annual Report 1943-44.

the *tsafi* by the converts and the insistence on the side of the elders reached a stalemate and created considerable tension, forcing the colonial government to impose restrictions on the number of religious classes opened by the missionaries.<sup>92</sup> The establishment of such classes was subjected by the Divisional Officer to the approval of the elders of the villages. For example, the elders of Gita and Nakere in Wamba district unanimously turned down the application by the SUM to establish religious classes in their villages. The reasons given were that the mission followers often revealed the *tsafi* secrets to the women and regarded the elders as *masu duhu* ("living in darkness").<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, the elders alleged that the converts encouraged the people to refrain from working on Sunday and also encouraged young women to marry only Christians.<sup>94</sup> The missionaries were insistent that their converts should keep Sunday a holy day while the elders demanded that young men should work on that day. The new adherents were mostly made up of the youths whose labour the elders relied on and their refusal to work on Sundays was backed by the missionaries.<sup>95</sup> This, among other reasons led the colonial administration and some elders to refuse permission to the missions to establish new religious classes in some of the affected villages. Commenting on the issue, the District Officer wrote:

The earlier applications which were approved, were so approved by the elders, largely because they had no previous experience of missionary activity and not being able to visualise the inevitable friction...the mission followers have increased in

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> NAK Wamba Dist. DEP/27: Sudan United Mission, Application for Classes of Religious Instructions and Schools (1945).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Rev. Akawu Mako at Akwanga, 4 April 2004.

numbers and as a result elders of villages who have not yet approved a C.R.I.,[Classes for Religious Instruction] taking a line through their neighbours who have done so, are very chary.<sup>96</sup>

After the Second World War, European missionaries came to realise that the conditions of their work would not be the same as prior to the war. The Christian missionaries were fighting two battles: firstly, training the small number of converts they had to succeed them after their departure from Nigeria, and secondly, countering the threat posed by the Muslim dominated Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) in the politics of decolonisation in northern Nigeria. This involved the Islamisation programme embarked upon by the leader of the party, Sir Ahmadu Bello. The greatest challenge to Christianity came in 1949, when a motion was moved by a member of the NPC for a private member's bill in the Northern House of Assembly calling for a curb on Christian missionary activities in northern Nigeria. Christian missionaries in central Nigeria saw this as an attempt to re-establish a new caliphate in the region, which the local people had resisted for over a century. Ahmadu Bello travelled to Muslim countries and received substantial sums of money in order to commence his mission of conversion, government funds and institutions were also used in this strategy.<sup>97</sup> Gifts were presented to the new converts and they were offered jobs by the Native Authorities as their reward for accepting Islam. Therefore, in the competition for converts in Akwanga after the Second World War, Christian missionaries were faced with the most difficult task of

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> J. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, Sardana of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (London, 1986), p.533.

engaging with revitalised Muslim missionaries backed by the state and its resources. In a secret survey of Islam commissioned by the government in 1952, it was observed that there was “a perpetual competition in the pagan areas between Christianity and Islam for converts...it is greatly believed that a greater number embrace Islam annually than are converted to Christianity.”<sup>98</sup>

The religious engagement in the 1950s was more to do with material benefits than the theological debates of the 1920s-1940s. The Christian missionaries, with limited resources and few foot soldiers, became concerned about the new competition they were facing. In Akwanga, however, Ahmadu Bello only gained a few converts, including Ragon, Bara, Usman Sarkin Noma, Musa (the late *sarkin* Akwanga) Akawu Baduku. These new converts were called *yan tuban Sarduna* (Sarduna's converts) and they received gifts of *alawayo* (white clothes) and salt, among other items as rewards for their conversion. Bara was promised the village headship of Gwanje, a promise that eluded him until his death in late 1980.<sup>99</sup> The disturbing aspect of the conversion mission of Ahmadu Bello to the Christian missionaries in Akwanga was that some of his converts were previously Christians. For example, Ragon and Isa Alushi were Christian converts before joining Islam to enhance their social status and mobility.<sup>100</sup> However, despite the resources and the manpower used in the process of Islamisation in Akwanga, there was no mass conversion to Islam.<sup>101</sup> In fact, the exercise gave the Christian missionaries an advantage. The church became the rallying point for the Christians and the missionaries

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<sup>98</sup> PRO CO 554/1321: Moslem Influence and Problems in Northern Nigeria, 1952. See details of the report in P.H.G Scott, *A Survey of Islam in Northern Nigeria in 1952* (Kaduna, 1953), p.11.

<sup>99</sup> Until his death, people that knew Bara called him *zaki* or *sai ka yi sarautan Gwanje* (Lion or you must become the chief of Gwanje). Interview with Reverend Ayuba Gajere, 2 March 2004.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with retired Captain Isa Alushi at Akwanga, 22 April 2004; Interview at Akwanga with Reverend Ayuba Gajere, 2 March 2004.

<sup>101</sup> *Sarduna's* converts in Akwanga were not more than a dozen.

began to instil in their clergy and converts the danger posed by Islam in the Northern Provinces. The horrors of the nineteenth century slave raids were recalled and anti-Hausa-Fulani feelings began to be aroused. The missionaries found sympathizers that were not necessarily Christians, but shared these sentiments. Therefore, Christian missionaries engaged with Islam in a psychological and propaganda war as opposed to the material benefits to tempt potential converts by Muslims. They de-emphasised the “worldly gains” people were seeking in a religion, but rather emphasised on “eternal life” through accepting Christ. According to Reverend Mako, “People at that time were carried away by material things and we as Christians we have to think about our relationship with God: *tserara ne muka zo, tserara ne za mu koma...komai arzikin mu, a duniya ne zamu barsu*” (“we came into this world naked, and naked we shall go back...no matter how wealthy we are, we are going to leave the wealth in this world”).<sup>102</sup>

It is important to mention that some people in Akwanga made a conscious decision to convert to Islam that was not associated with the conversion exercise carried out by Ahmadu Bello. The benefits of belonging to the Islamic faith pushed some people into joining the new religion. For example, Islam brought prestige and respect to its converts and thus, enhanced social mobility in the colonial society. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Hausa-Fulani, who were mostly Muslims were appointed into senior positions in Akwanga and their privileged positions was perceived by the local people as a result of their religion. Thus, the attraction of Islam for some individuals was associated the opportunity to gain promotion in the Native Administration.<sup>103</sup> For example, according

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Rev. Akawu Mako at Akwanga, 4 April 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Interview at Wamba with Yusuf Waju, 23 March 2004.

to Isa Alushi, the reason for his conversion to Islam was because of the opportunity it offered him in the Native Administration and the new social status that Muslims had at that time.<sup>104</sup>

On another note, trade became an important factor that aided in the conversion to Islam of the few emerging local businessmen in Akwanga in the late 1950s. When the government lifted the restriction imposed on the foodstuff business in Plateau province after the Second World War in 1945, a few individuals in Akwanga began to serve as middlemen for Hausa grain and groundnut merchants from Kano.<sup>105</sup> It was only in the late 1950s that local businessmen like the late Alhaji Angulu, Musa and Yakubu were able to engage in long-distance trade. According to Alhaji Musa, they were initially encouraged to become Muslims by their Hausa business partners who offered them gifts and credit facilities. However, the need to establish a business network outside Akwanga was the major factor that encouraged local businessmen to convert to Islam.<sup>106</sup> As Alhaji Yakubu remarked, “in those days, even if you died in Kano or Kaduna, people would not have known, but by accepting Islam, we became part of the Muslim family.”<sup>107</sup> In addition, by converting to Islam, these local businessmen became acceptable to the Hausa traders in Kano, which aided their economic mobility in business circles. In fact the Hausa businessmen were able to contribute substantially towards Alhaji Angulu and Musa’s pilgrimages to Mecca.<sup>108</sup>

Belonging to the Muslim community, however, came with its problems. For the individual converts in Akwanga, their aspects of life were permeated with religious

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with retired Captain Isa Alushi at Akwanga, 22 April 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Interview at Nasarawa Eggon with Alhaji Musa, 16 March 2004.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Interview at Nasarawa Eggon with Alhaji Yakubu, 22 May 2004.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*



meanings and thus, they expressed devotion to God not only through religious ritual, but also through the general conduct of day-to-day life. According to Sergeant Buba, “our daily lives are guided by religiously oriented moral concerns, for example, giving help to the poor and weak, dress modestly and completely avoid alcohol and intoxicants.”<sup>109</sup> Some of the duties expected from the Muslim converts – dressing modestly and avoiding alcohol – made them distinct in their outlook and behaviour from the non-Muslims. They began to adopt Hausa dresses and language and kept a distance from traditional ceremonies, which usually brought the local people together.<sup>110</sup> The new converts looked at themselves as having more in common with the Hausa-Fulani or their newfound Muslim community than their kinsmen. The consumption of alcohol and other intoxicants was substituted with the chewing of kola nuts.

Generally, the growth of Christianity in Akwanga was slow until the 1950s. By 1955, Sunday attendance exceeded 6,000 with 700 registered members. From 1955 to 1957, there was a further increase in Sunday attendance from 6,500 to 10,035 and growth in membership from 734 to 1,121.<sup>111</sup> It should be noted that the early preconditions of becoming a Christian were relaxed. In addition, the emergence of indigenous clergy helped in the process of winning local people to the Christian faith. According to an informant, Isuwa, “the ordination of pastor Abimiku in the early 1950s was important to the growth of Christianity amongst the Eggon. We saw him as one of us and he spoke the language we understood.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Interview at Andaha with Sergeant Buba, 23 April 2004.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> J.B. Grimley and G.E. Robinson, *Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria* (Michigan, 1966), p.100.

<sup>112</sup> Interview at Endehu with Isuwa Ambi, 15 November 2003.

Changes in northern Nigeria in the 1950s had a wider implication for self-rule in the church. The radical political changes during the period transformed the framework of missionary strategies as well as the relationship between missionaries and their converts. Some of the missionaries had always viewed national aspirations with considerable misgivings and they regarded the assertive, self-confident stand of African nationalism as detrimental to evangelical Christianity.<sup>113</sup> After 1945, African nationalism in Nigeria assumed a more radical dimension as some nationalists began to demand political changes in native administration. Some of the nationalist leaders often castigated the missions for collaborating with colonial oppression and exploitation. As a result, the missionaries became fearful that the anti-colonial and anti-European sentiments characteristic of that era might be extended to the rejection of Christianity. The SIM working in central Nigeria described the situation as “dark and threatening.”<sup>114</sup> The SIM response to what it saw as the propaganda of the “atheistic literature” of the nationalists was the establishment of a magazine, *The African Challenge* in 1951 as a weapon in the war of ideas.<sup>115</sup> In 1954, the SIM opened Radio ELWA, which became the voice of the mission in the propaganda war. Within the mission churches, the European missionaries began to hand over church control to Nigerians and encouraged the development of self-rule in the local churches. The process of transfer of the SIM mission to Nigerians resulted in the establishment of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) in 1954. The formation of the church began with a series of meetings in 1950-54. At a meeting in Kagoro in 1954, a new constitution was accepted and in May of the same

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<sup>113</sup> See Ayandele, *Missionary Impact*, chapter two.

<sup>114</sup> *The Sudan Witness*, 2 (1951), p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Obed Munchapku, (former editor of the *Challenge*) at Akwanga, 14 December 2003.

year at Egbe the ECWA was founded.<sup>116</sup> The SUM was looking at self-rule in the church from a political point of view, their move towards organising all the SUM churches in northern Nigeria into one institutional body was partly motivated by long-term political considerations. They had experienced the benefits of belonging to a large organisation in their dealing with the colonial administration and they felt that a similar organisation would be in a better position in relation to the future authorities of an independent Nigeria. In 1955, all the SUM churches including those of Akwanga formed the *Tarayyar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi A Sudan* (the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in the Sudan) after a meeting at Randa.<sup>117</sup>

The politics of decolonisation influenced the development of self-rule in the churches. At that time, it became clear to the missionaries that the Muslim-dominated NPC would take over the government of the region and they became apprehensive about their future in the new Nigeria. The missionaries were confronted with two major problems, namely, would they lose their property to the government in the event of their being forced out of the country? To whom would they hand over their property? Their fear was against the background of the experience in China in 1949, when Christian missionaries were expelled from the country and had their property confiscated. This increased the fear amongst the missionaries working in northern Nigeria and they began to interpret Islam mainly in political terms, "as a movement aspiring for political dominance" and were worried that the "Muslims of a future independent Nigeria would control northern Nigeria completely and block the expansion of Christianity."<sup>118</sup> Faced with this situation, the missionaries began to think about counter measures and they

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<sup>116</sup> Grimley and Robinson, *Church Growth in Central Nigeria*, p.83.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p.87.

<sup>118</sup> N. Kastfelt, *Religion and Politics in Nigeria: A Study in Middle Belt Christianity* (London, 1994), p.37.

recognised that their converts should begin to take over more leading positions in the churches. The SUM began this process of transfer by ordaining its first indigenous pastors: Pastors Ambi, Abimiku and Mamman from Jama'a and Akwanga in 1958. The SUM also took steps to register the Churches in Akwanga with the government.<sup>119</sup> By encouraging self-rule, the missionaries hoped to have considerable indirect control on subsequent political events.

## CONCLUSION

Although colonial rule in the Akwanga region encouraged the spread of Christianity and Islam, the majority of the population remained indifferent towards both these religious faiths. It is difficult to explain the behaviour of the local people towards Islam and Christianity, but it is possible to suggest that individuals had different motives for converting to these world religions. For example, the early converts to Christianity amongst the Eggon people did so because of the healing powers associated with the new religion, which was backed by the mission hospitals. Local businessmen found Islam more attractive to enhance their economic mobility because of the credit facilities they enjoyed and business network they established by belonging to the Muslim community. However, the *ashim* cult and other traditional practices endured despite the pressure to change during the colonial period. Although Christianity and Islam offered an alternative vision for the future, these world religions were unable to overthrow the indigenous beliefs in the religious lives of the peoples of Akwanga. The majority of the local people stuck to their indigenous beliefs, which continued to dominate religious life throughout the colonial period.

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<sup>119</sup> Fifty Years in the Church, p.26.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE POLITICS OF DECOLONISATION IN AKWANGA, 1945-1960**

This chapter examines the process of decolonisation in Akwanga. It begins by looking at the constitutional changes after the Second World War, which made it possible for the educated elites to be involved in the administration of the region. The MacPherson constitution of 1951 set in motion the formation of political parties to contest elections. In central Nigeria, the decolonisation period witnessed the rise of a separatist movement for the creation of a Middle Belt state, which was supported by the Christian missions. The protest movement was a reaction against Hausa-Fulani Muslim domination and it led to the formation of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in 1955. The UMBC represented the minority interests of ethnic groups in central Nigeria. Although the size of its legislative delegations to the Regional House of Assembly was never large enough to be effective, they served as a means of public expression for minority concerns.

Before the 1959 federal election, most people in Akwanga were not directly involved in the political process in northern Nigeria. This was because elections were carried out indirectly and through multiple constituencies. However, churches in Akwanga became involved in politics because the politicians that emerged in Plateau province were mission trained clergy and teachers. The church became a political network for expressing a Christian identity against the Hausa-Fulani and Muslim dominated Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) in the process of decolonisation. When direct elections were introduced in 1959, a new group of politicians emerged

in Akwanga who had no connection with the Christian missionaries. They were government trained employees of the Native Administration and because of their educational background, they became opinion leaders in the region.

### **POLITICAL CHANGE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1945-1959**

The Northern Region of Nigeria before 1945 was relatively peaceful in terms of political development. The system of indirect rule had attained its greatest success in the region and it gave little or no encouragement to Western education and thus ensured political stagnation. Although the government recognised the need to train people in order to participate in the colonial administration, the intention was not to produce an intelligentsia who would later challenge the colonial status quo as experienced in India. In the emirates, the government was initially only interested in educating the sons of the emirs with the hope of training them to be the future leaders of the region. In addition, missionary activities were restricted in the Muslim areas, which meant that the *talakawa* (commoners) had no access to mission education, which delayed their political awareness. The highly stratified authoritarian political structure of the Hausa states was enhanced by certain interpretations of Islam designed to inculcate habits and attitudes of subordination, which prevented any open challenge to the Native Administration before 1945. M.G. Smith observed: "Hausa regard obedience to their superiors and loyalty to their chiefs as one of the doctrines of Islam - *adininmu addinin biyayya ne* - (our religion is a religion of obedience)...Islam acts as another force giving definition and stability to the social system."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M.G. Smith, *The Economy of Hausa Communities of Zaria* (London, 1955), p.93.

In Akwanga, the late introduction of Western education delayed the political awareness of the local people in the region. The government was reluctant in establishing schools and although they acknowledged that the division was poorly served educationally, blamed it on the “apathy of the people themselves towards education.”<sup>2</sup> The first attempt to educate the local people was started by Reverend Hepburn, who established a SUM mission station in Wana district in 1926. He began a school, teaching literacy and Bible classes in Hausa. Those admitted were Eggon pupils while the Mada boys attended the SUM mission school at Randa in Jama’a division.<sup>3</sup> By 1929, the SUM school at Wana had a total of five boarders and a fluctuating number of day pupils.<sup>4</sup> In 1936 the colonial administration opened an elementary school at Wamba. The performance of the school up to the early 1940s was regarded as a failure by the government and the education department. This was blamed on the negative attitude of parents towards education. The concern of the parents however, has to be seen from the perspective of the indigenous systems of training. The local people had their system of education designed to enable the children to participate fully in society. To educate the children meant teaching them about the environment, farming, building houses, making crafts and tools among others. All these provided an immediate means of livelihood to the family as opposed to colonial education, which meant nothing to the local people. Also, there were no leading examples for the people to appreciate the future benefit of sending their children to school but it was considered a total waste of resources.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NAK Jos Prof 2282: Southern Division, Half and Annually Report 1937.

<sup>3</sup> NAK Jos Prof 45/1930: Akwanga Division Report for the Year 1930.

<sup>4</sup> NAK SNP17/11263: Akwanga Division, Plateau Province Notes on, by Capt Masterton Smith (1929).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Adamu Yakubu and Dauda Rabo on 3 March 2004.

In July 1942, a new elementary school was started at Andaha and was attended by about 24 pupils.<sup>6</sup> The attempt to erect these schools at Kwarra and Wana was delayed as the necessary teaching staff was not forthcoming. In the 1950s there was expansion in both mission and government education in Akwanga. This period also witnessed the emergence of qualified teachers that were from the area and they included among others, Audu Waju, Mohammed Waju, Audu Maiyaki and Adamu Musa Gale.<sup>7</sup> These educated elites became opinion leaders and they helped in shaping the political landscape of Akwanga region during the politics of decolonisation.

The end of the Second World War marked a new beginning in the political history and the subsequent functions of the Native Authorities. Post-war political pressure resulted in the changes that the colonial government introduced. There were several explanations given for the changing British colonial policy during that period. According to Creech Jones (the post-war Labour Government Secretary of State for Colonies), the propaganda of the war of denouncing authoritarianism and preserving freedom and democracy became infectious and it would have been embarrassing and hypocritical for Britain to “show indifference to colonial progress.”<sup>8</sup> Although the process of imperial ‘liquidation’ occurred very rapidly, it is impossible to point to a particular event and say that this marked the end of the British Empire. Decolonisation should be seen as a result of several interlocking factors making the transfer of power from the British to their local subjects in northern Nigeria both advisable and possible. According to Heinlein, the principal reason was Britain’s, “habit of considering the goodwill of local nationalists as the best guarantee for its interests; the momentum of disengagement in most colonies

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<sup>6</sup> NAK Jos Prof 4290: Southern Division Half Yearly and Annual Report.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> A.C. Jones, (ed), *New Fabian Colonial Essays* (London, 1959), p.20.



can be attributed both to local dynamics as well as to changed international conditions.”<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that British policy makers at the end of the war did not envisage full independence for their colonial possession but they attempted to, “adjust political relationships; a process which ultimately accelerated and escalated beyond Britain’s control.”<sup>10</sup>

One of the post-war political changes was the introduction of the Richards Constitution in 1945, which was aimed at promoting “the unity of Nigeria, to provide adequately within that unity for the diverse elements which make up the country, and to secure greater participation by Africans in the discussion of their own affairs.”<sup>11</sup> The new constitution enlarged the legislature in Lagos to allow the participation of the northerners who were hitherto excluded by the Clifford constitution of 1922. It also established three regions in Nigeria with regional legislatures, each region having jurisdiction over its own budgetary and administrative matters. In northern Nigeria, the constitution established the House of Chiefs and House of Assembly for the region. The House of Chiefs was made up of all the first class chiefs and not less than ten second class chiefs selected from among their members by an electoral college of second-class chiefs. Chiefs in Akwanga were of lower grade (third and fourth class status) and they therefore had to be specially nominated by the Governor to attend any meeting or debate in the House of Chiefs. The first special appointment to the House of Chiefs in Akwanga occurred in 1951 when the chief of Wamba was nominated to represent the chiefs of the area.<sup>12</sup> The Northern House of Assembly on the other hand among other officials had no less than 20 or more than 24 unofficial members, of whom 14 to 18 were to be selected by Native Authorities and six to be

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<sup>9</sup> F. Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation, 1945-1963: Scrutinising the Official Mind* (London, 2002), pp.5-6.

<sup>10</sup> N.J. White, *Decolonisation: The British Experience since 1945* (London, 1999), p.3.

<sup>11</sup> A.F. Richards, *Political and Constitutional Future of Nigeria* (Lagos, 1944), p.8.

<sup>12</sup> *Northern Region of Nigeria: Provincial Reports 1951* (Kaduna, 1953), p.60.

appointed by the Governor.<sup>13</sup> The principle of nomination was objected to and regarded by the southern Nigerian nationalists as undemocratic as only four out of the 28 unofficial members were to be directly elected. Therefore, the nominated members were never representatives of the people as they represented the colonial government that nominated them.

Before the introduction of the Richards constitution, the educated group in northern Nigeria were politically weak but the changes brought about by the constitution helped them to influence government policies. Some of them were nominated as unofficial members of the House of Assembly and they used the platform of the House to criticise the Native Authority system. The educated group realised the need for reforms in the operation of the Native Administration in the region and in August 1950, Tafawa Balewa moved a motion in the unelected Northern House of Assembly calling for reforms of the system. His boss in the education department in Bauchi province influenced his radical stand. At the end of 1949, Mr. Robert Hepburn Wright was appointed as the Provincial Education Officer for Bauchi and he formed a close relationship with Balewa. Wright was responsible for promoting Balewa into the senior cadre of the civil service and he worked with him to press for administrative reforms in the region. He was instrumental in Balewa's speech in the Northern House of Assembly and later in the Lagos Legislative Council calling for reforms in the northern region.<sup>14</sup> In the Northern Regional House of Assembly, Balewa demanded that an independent commission be set up to investigate the system of Native Administration in the Northern Provinces and to make recommendations for its modernisation and reform. He added that a full discussion at all levels should be permitted on any report to be produced. He

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<sup>13</sup> *Colonial Records on Northern Nigeria* (London, 1954), pp.142-146.

<sup>14</sup> *Then the Wind Changed: Nigerian Letters of Robert Hepburn Wright, 1936-49*, Edited and Introduced by R. Pearce (London, 1992), p.xix.

concluded that the people of the region were ruled by might and little effort was made to win their confidence.<sup>15</sup>

This speech by Balewa came as a surprise to many members of the House who wondered how a man dared to criticise the NA openly. According to Ahmadu Bello (who later became the premier of Northern Region), “no one had hitherto ventured to comment publicly about, much less criticise the Native Authorities and administration. The schoolmaster from Bauchi was on dangerous grounds...in some quarters heads were wagged and eyebrows lifted.”<sup>16</sup> The motion moved by Balewa received a mixed reception outside the House. The educated groups in the region supported Balewa’s view on the need to change the way the Native Administrations were operating, but the colonial government and the chiefs were anxious about the new demands. Although the government accepted some of Balewa’s observations, they dismissed his criticism of the operation of the NA system. The government argued that Balewa had no intimate knowledge of the working of the Native Administration and that his comments were a reflection of the insecurity and frustration of the educated groups in the service of the NAs. The colonial government did not accept the suggestion that an independent commission should be appointed to review the operation of the NAs but promised to consult the educated groups in any future restructuring of the system. The chiefs rejected any reform that would undermine their authority in the performance of their duties. Senior emirs and chiefs did not accept the suggestion of the appointment of a commission and according to Rwang Pam (the chief of Jos), although he agreed with Balewa’s observations, he did not want any commission to be constituted.<sup>17</sup> While the emir of

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<sup>15</sup> A. Bello, *My Life* (Cambridge, 1962), p.73.

<sup>16</sup> Bello, *My Life*, p.74.

<sup>17</sup> A.D Yahaya, *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1950-1970* (Zaria, 1980), p.39.

Keffi supported the idea of appointing a commission, the emirs of Jama'a and Lafia were either indifferent or did not want to comment.<sup>18</sup>

The Richards constitution was envisaged to last for nine years, with the provision that there should be a limited review of it at the end of the third year.<sup>19</sup> However, the constitution soon came under attack from Nigerian politicians and the major source of complaint about it was that it was imposed from above, for there was no consultation of public opinion. When Sir John MacPherson became the Governor of Nigeria in 1948, he announced that the Richards constitution would be revised earlier than envisaged.<sup>20</sup> Constitutional conferences were organised and it resulted in the introduction of a new constitution (the MacPherson constitution), which was put in force in 1951. Under the new constitution, the three regions got a higher degree of autonomy; the Regional Assemblies were maintained and regional elections were to be held in 1951. The Regional Assemblies were to be subjected to a central body, the House of Representatives. The Regional elections of 1951 were the first to be held in Nigeria. The elections were to be indirect and this more than anything else was a decisive push towards the formation of political parties.

With decolonisation on the way, educated groups saw themselves as the future leaders of an independent Nigeria, while the chiefs began to refashion their position in order to make themselves relevant to the new political era. The gradual transfer of power to the educated groups in the administration of northern Nigeria tormented the emirs and chiefs. Some of the educated groups saw the traditional rulers as "anachronism to the process of democratisation and modernisation."<sup>21</sup> The chiefs began to weigh their options on how to respond to the changing political climate. In

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Richards, *Future of Nigeria*, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> *Legislative Council Debate*, 17 August 1948, p.8.

<sup>21</sup> M. Yakubu, *An Aristocracy in Political Crisis: The End of Indirect Rule and the Emergence of Party Politics in the Emirates of Northern Nigeria* (London, 1996), p.1.

some parts of Africa, traditional rulers quickly adjusted to the political change by establishing political parties. In northern Nigeria, the chiefs contemplated the formation of their party in association with the unofficial members of the House Assembly but the idea was abandoned with the emergence of the NPC, which became pro-Native Administration and chiefly power.

In the 1940s, embryonic political associations began to be organised by the educated youths who were exposed to nationalist thought from southern Nigeria or abroad. One of the most important early associations in northern Nigeria was the Bauchi General Improvement Union, established in 1943-44 by *malam* Sa'adu Zungur, who in 1948 became the Federal Secretary of the NCNC. In 1946, the first non-localised northern political association was formed in Kano called the Northern Progressive Association (NEPA) with *malam* Raji Abdallah as its general secretary.<sup>22</sup> NEPA's programme emphasised political reform, economic development and educational opportunity for promising northern students. Emerging political associations in Nigeria had different motives in their formation. In the south, criticisms were directed at the colonial system as a whole, while in the north, criticism was directed at the application of the principles of indirect rule. Within the different associations in northern Nigeria, there was disagreement as to what direction these reforms should take.

In 1948, following the amalgamation of various associations, the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* (JMA) was established at Kaduna as a cultural organisation.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> For further details about the development of local associations in northern Nigeria, see R.L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties in an Emerging African Nation* (First Africa world edition: New York, 2004); R.L. Sklar and C.S. Whitaker, "Nigeria," J. Coleman and C. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Los Angeles, 1970); B.J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1968); C.S. Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria* (New Jersey, 1970); B.J. Dudley, "The Northern Peoples' Congress" in J.P. Macintosh (ed), *Nigerian Government and Politics* (Evanston, 1966).

<sup>23</sup> Dudley however argued that the JMA had political orientation. B.J. Dudley, "The Nomination of Parliamentary Candidates in Northern Nigeria," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 2 (1963).

JMA held its first general meeting at Kano in December 1949 and over ninety delegates attended. However, at the meeting, some radical members of the JMA wanted the organisation to be declared a political party, a move that was resisted by the majority of its members. The disagreement on the issue resulted in a split and the subsequent formation of *Jam'iyyar Neman Sawaba* - The Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in 1950, while the JMA continued as a cultural organisation.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, NEPU became the first political party to be formed in northern Nigeria. NEPU was established as a left wing political party and it was anti-Native Authorities and the established *masun Sarauta* (ruling class). NEPU became the party of *talakawa* who felt resentful against the bureaucratic intemperance and autocracy of the Native Authority. The party's 1950 declaration of principle was geared towards the emancipation of the *talakawa* from domination of *masun sarauta* through reform of the autocratic Native Authority system.<sup>25</sup>

The JMA continued as a social and cultural organisation with the objective of combating "ignorance, idleness and injustice" in the northern region.<sup>26</sup> In order to participate in the 1951 election, the JMA met in Zaria and a decision was taken to declare the association as a political party, which became known as Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) in October 1951. The conservative outlook and background of most its members made it more acceptable to the emirs and chiefs and therefore, the NPC aimed "not to usurp the authority of the Natural Rulers but to enhance such authority whenever and wherever possible."<sup>27</sup> It confined its membership and activities to the north. After the establishment of the NPC, the government banned civil servants from participating in politics, but they did not

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<sup>24</sup> Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, p.146.

<sup>25</sup> Sklar and Whitaker, "Nigeria," J. Coleman and C. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties*, pp.606-607.

<sup>26</sup> Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, p.210.

<sup>27</sup> Bello, *My Life*, p.96.

place any restriction on the Native Authority staff. Therefore, the NPC drew its support from the chiefs, ruling class and the Native Authorities. The principles that both the NPC and NEPU stood for were contradictory and while the NPC wanted to strengthen the position of the ruling class, NEPU's aim was to abolish these powers where they existed. In other words, NEPU projected its image in northern Nigeria as one of irreconcilable interests with the NPC. This "antagonism of interest" manifested "itself as a class struggle between the members of that vicious circle of the Native Administrations on the one hand and the *talakawa* on the other".<sup>28</sup> NEPU, "being the only political party of the *talakawa*" was diametrically opposed to those of the NPC "family compact" oligarchy which it was determined to reduce to nonentity.<sup>29</sup> Thus, both the NPC and NEPU in different respects became part of the reaction to certain implications of indirect rule system in northern Nigeria.

The period after the Second World War also witnessed the emergence of separatist movements in different parts of the north. Although the aims of these movements vary, they were generally against the dominance of the Hausa-Fulani in the region. In Plateau province, the most important association was the Berom Progressive Union (BPU) founded in 1945 to secure fair compensation from the mining companies for land used for tin production.<sup>30</sup> The BPU also had a political motivation. Apart from seeking compensation for the Berom people, it wanted to take control of the affairs of Jos township, which since its inception in the early days of tin mining, was dominated by the Hausa-Fulani. The BPU was opposed to the Hausa-Fulani dominated Jos Native Authority and as a consequence of petitions by the association, a Berom chief of Jos was appointed in 1947. The BPU became

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<sup>28</sup> Pamphlet: *NEPU Declaration of Principle* (Jos, 1952).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Dudley, *Parties and Politics*, p.92.

instrumental in the organisational direction of the protests movements in central Nigeria that resulted in the formation of the UMBC in 1955.

In central Nigeria, Christian missionaries were instrumental to the formation of political associations and therefore raising the political consciousness of the local people. As discussed in Chapter 6, the radical political changes after the Second World War transformed the framework of missionary strategies as well as the relationship between missionaries and their converts. They became apprehensive about their future in the Northern Provinces and their fear was set against the background of the experience in China in 1949, when Christian missionaries were expelled from the country. Thus, the missionaries became sensitive about political change, which threatened their work. In order to co-ordinate a response to the political situation in the region, a secret meeting was held at Bukuru in Jos in 1948 to consider a Christian response. The churches were to raise the consciousness of its members and to warn them of the dangers posed by Islam.<sup>31</sup> What set the Middle Belt movement in motion was the reaction to a private member's bill in the Northern House of Assembly in 1949 calling for a curb on Christian missionary activities in northern Nigeria. Reaction to this bill led to the formation of the Northern Non-Muslim League (NNML) in 1949 under Pastor David Lot and it was supported principally by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Sudan United Mission (SUM). The formation of the NNML raised two major problems. Firstly, there were non-Muslims in the predominantly Muslim areas of Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Borno and Zaria and the NNML was not intended to include them.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the organisation was narrowly restricted to only the people of central Nigeria. Secondly, the NNML's association with the Christian missions made some people in the area

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<sup>31</sup> H. Kukah and T. Falola, *Religious Militancy and Self-Assertion: Islam and Politics in Nigeria* (Aldershot, 1996), p.237.

<sup>32</sup> Dudley, *Parties and Politics*, p.93.



uncomfortable and if the peoples of central Nigeria were to present a common front, an organisation not so obviously associated with missions was needed.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in 1950, the NNML was renamed the Middle Zone League (MZL) in order to tone down its overt religious identity and project a more political identity “in order to emphasise the separatist predilection of its membership.”<sup>34</sup>

As the 1951 election drew nearer, it became clear to the Christian missionaries working in central Nigeria that Muslims would dominate the new political era in the Northern Provinces. According to Maxwell, “Moslem members of the Government would greatly out-number the non-Moslems, so that the Christian minority would be hopelessly out-voted.”<sup>35</sup> Churches became the rallying point for the Christians and the missionaries began to instil in their clergy and converts, “the idea of an impending Moslem subjugation and Islamisation of all non-Moslems living in the Northern Provinces.”<sup>36</sup> The missionaries encouraged their converts to be united in order to present a common front against the political danger ahead. In 1950 Maxwell observed: “If they [Christians] do not stick together in these days of a new governmental order, when the executive and legislative work of Nigeria is being transferred to African hands, they may find themselves being exploited by the Moslem peoples of the north. The only unifying force for the non-Moslems is the Christian church.”<sup>37</sup> Although the regional election was indirect and based on multiple constituencies, the churches in Plateau province became involved in political campaigns. In Akwanga, despite the fact that the people in the region were not directly affected by the election, Sunday sermons became politicised.<sup>38</sup> Clergy

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, p.346.

<sup>35</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, p.299.

<sup>36</sup> Mangywat, “Process of Class Formation,” p.123.

<sup>37</sup> Maxwell, *Century of Grace*, pp.293-4.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Baba Loko at *Ungwan Loko*, 8 November 2003.

and Christian politicians from Jos and Bukuru began to visit churches in Akwanga to educate the local people on the political situation in the region. The Bible became the key political text used to develop a strong Christian identity. As in parts of Africa, the book of Exodus became a symbol of political struggle because the story in the book has elements of oppression, liberation and political struggle.<sup>39</sup> Parallels were drawn between the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt and the political oppression of Christian minorities in northern Nigeria. Christians in central Nigeria like the Jews in bondage felt that: "mere servants have ruled over us. There is no one tearing us away from their hands" (Lamentations 5:8).<sup>40</sup> Strong leaders like Moses and Joshua in the Bible were needed to carry the Christians out of their political bondage.

Those that led the MZL were either clergy or former graduates of the SUM school at Gindiri. They took control of political leadership in the whole of Plateau province because of their educational background, and these communities looked upon them as people who were knowledgeable in politics and therefore could represent their interests.<sup>41</sup> Their opinion was sought after and respected. Christian politicians in central Nigeria in general used the Bible to justify their involvement in politics and according to Kastfelt, they sought not only the political kingdom, but the kingdom of God as well and their work was "to unite the two into a Christian political kingdom, or a Christian community."<sup>42</sup> The interpretation of Exodus in politics therefore implied that the Muslims oppressed the Christians and like God's chosen people, the duty of every Christian politician was to lead the people out of

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<sup>39</sup> Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, p.133.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Baba Loko at Ungwan Loko, 8 November 2003.

<sup>41</sup> Group interview with Lumbo, Tache Naluku and Maiganga Zenya at Gwanje, 13 November 2003.

<sup>42</sup> N. Kastfelt, "Seek Ye First the Christian Political Kingdom: The Bible as a Political Model in the Nigerian Middle Belt," in N. Kastfelt (ed), *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and Koran as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa* (London, 2000), p.210.

political bondage.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the MZL basically sought to protect Christian interests, particularly from the perceived Muslim threat. The MZL leaders and their supporters saw the forthcoming election as an opportunity to sweep away the Muslim domination and replace it with “a new order where peace and God’s justice will reign” (Isaiah 2-11; Revelation 21:1-5).<sup>44</sup>

The 1951 regional election was carried out on a provincial basis and all five candidates elected in Plateau province were Christians. However, the Hausa-Fulani members of the NPC dominated the newly constituted Northern Regional House of Assembly. The imbalance in the membership of the House meant that there was continuous tension between the Muslim majority and the non-Muslim minority, especially when it came to the discussion on religion. As observed by one colonial official in 1952:

In speaking about the Northern House of Assembly, Mr. Niven [President of the Northern House of Assembly] said that he had found his task a difficult one and had frequently had to intervene in the course of debates to call members to order. He said that the most difficult part of his job had been to prevent the discussion of religion in the House. He said, for example, that in discussing a grant to mission schools Moslems speakers had attempted to attack Christianity and that Christian members of the House, mostly from Middle Belt Provinces had attempted in their replies to defend Christianity as such.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.211.

<sup>44</sup> Reverend Akawu Mako: Personal communication.

<sup>45</sup> PRO CO 554/372: Situation in the Northern Province of Nigeria, 1952.

It should be noted that the actions of the Muslim members of the Regional House of Assembly gave room for their non-Muslim counterparts to be suspicious. In a secret survey of Islam in northern Nigeria commissioned by the government in 1952, the findings revealed that the Muslim members of the House had political, social and religious interests in other Muslim countries.<sup>46</sup> Such interest according to the report was evinced by repeated requests in the Regional Houses and their committees for visits to be arranged for delegates from Northern Provinces to inspect and report on the educational, religious and economic systems in operation in Muslim countries like Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.<sup>47</sup> In addition, when it came to the ministerial appointments after the 1951 Regional elections, non-Muslims were excluded. When the first four Northern Regional ministers and three northern ministers at Lagos were appointed, they were all Muslims. When three seats on the Executive Council of the Northern Region were unfilled, Sharwood Smith (Governor of Northern Provinces, 1952-57) suggested these seats to be filled with non-Muslims, but the suggestion provoked a great opposition from Muslim ministers.<sup>48</sup> According to him:

When we discussed the matter [of appointing non-Muslim ministers] one evening at an informal meeting at which the Northern Ministers at the centre were also present, I found, to my great surprise, considerable opposition to the idea. I was thought to be exaggerating or prejudiced. Abubakar, for one, contended that this talk of anti-Muslim and anti-Fulani feeling was largely propaganda spread by the more bigoted of the foreign missionaries

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<sup>46</sup> PRO CO 554/1321: Moslem Influence and Problems in Northern Nigeria, 1952; P.H.G. Scott, *A Survey of Islam in Northern Nigeria in 1952* (Lagos, 1953), p.1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> B.S. Smith, *But Always as Friends: Northern Nigeria and the Cameroons, 1921-1957* (London, 1969), p.237.

in the pagan areas...If the region was to have unity the Muslim Ministers must admit non-Muslims to their councils as equals and accord them responsibilities equivalent to their own.<sup>49</sup>

In 1953, Muslim ministers reconsidered their earlier stand on appointing non-Muslims to the Executive Council and two ministers were appointed from central Nigeria: Peter Achimugu and Yahaya Ilorin. However, in order to weaken the MZL opposition in the House of Assembly, the leadership of the ruling party pressed the leaders of the MZL to join the NPC in 1953.<sup>50</sup> This led to a split in the MZL: one group, under the Berom leadership, favoured an alliance with the NPC, while others opposed it. Those that opposed the party alliance with the NPC formed a new party, Middle Belt Peoples' Party (MBPP). The alliance with the NPC by some members of the MZL was perceived to be betrayal of the mandate of the peoples of central Nigeria they claimed they were representing.<sup>51</sup>

The first election that peoples of Akwanga were directly involved was the 1956 regional election. During the election, Plateau province was divided into seven electoral districts and for the first time Akwanga was allocated a seat for all the districts.<sup>52</sup> The electoral regulations stipulated that there would be 131 elected members to the Regional House of Assembly, four official and five special members – making a total of 140 members.<sup>53</sup> The election was to be conducted through an electoral college. Membership of the Electoral College was confined to those that were not in prison or had not been convicted of any offence. Candidates that were

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.238.

<sup>50</sup> The NPC did not like the criticism from the opposition parties. The feelings of most of the NPC ministers was summarized by Niven, "why pay someone to criticize you?...there are plenty ready to do so without payment." Niven, *Nigerian Kaleidoscope*, p.256.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Reverend Mari at Alushi, 22 April 2004.

<sup>52</sup> NAK 2559: House of Assembly Elections, 1956.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*.

interested in contesting the election must deposit £25 in cash “in such treasury as the Electoral Officer or Presiding Officer may direct.”<sup>54</sup> In order to conduct a successful election in Akwanga, the total seats for the final Electoral College was divided per head of the population of the three districts. The 100 members were divided as follows, Eggon 48, Mada 27 and Wamba 25.<sup>55</sup> Primary elections were to be held on 8 October while the final election was to be conducted on 30 October. Each of the districts in Akwanga was divided into electoral areas. In Wamba, for example, the district was divided into three electoral centre, where elections would be held; Junior Primary School Wamba, the Chiefs Palace and the Native Administration Office.<sup>56</sup> The District Officer, Mr Wilson was appointed as the Electoral Officer while other two colonial officials, Mr Hilton and Gregory were to serve as returning officers. The 1956 election in Akwanga was an NPC affair as the two candidates contesting in the election were from the same party. Although the election to the Regional House of Assembly was through an electoral college, those that were contesting the election carried out their campaigns in all the districts.<sup>57</sup> The two contenders in the election were Muazu Gambo Nunku, a former court scribe and Audu Waju, a teacher from Wamba. Muazu won the election with 59 votes while Audu Waju secured only 20 votes.<sup>58</sup>

The NPC dominance in the regional election of 1956 in Akwanga did not reflect the changes experienced in other parts of central Nigeria. As already mentioned, the MZL witnessed its first split in 1953 and following the efforts of the Chief of Kagoro, the factions were reconciled and this resulted in the formation of the UMBC at Kafanchan in June 1955. The UMBC emerged to provide

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> NAK 2559: House of Assembly Elections, 1956.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Interview at Wamba with Yusuf Maikano, 24 March 2004.

<sup>58</sup> NAK 2559: House of Assembly Elections, 1956.

organisational direction to the demands of the people of central Nigeria. The major aim of the UMBC was to represent the minority groups of the region in the politics of independence and to actualise the creation of a Middle Belt State with its House of Chiefs and House of Assembly distinct from the Northern Region. The demand for the creation of the Middle Belt state by the UMBC was reinforced by the difference of religion between the various groups in central Nigeria and the Muslims in the north of it. According to Logams, "underlying the conceptions of the Middle Belt political identity in Nigerian politics was Christian solidarity in the religious identity of the Middle Belt as contrasted with the Islamic identity in the north."<sup>59</sup> Thus, the driving force in the formation of the UMBC was religious affinity between the peoples of central Nigeria rather than ethnicity.

The lack of consensus in the leadership of the UMBC meant that the party was in a continuous crisis. In 1956, Sharwood Smith described the crisis in the UMBC: "The United Middle Belt Congress has experienced fission in so many and diverse ways and places that its chaotic and eternally fluid state defies summary. Its right wing is commanded by Pastor David Lot, its left wing by Moses Rwang."<sup>60</sup> Despite the inconsistency in the leadership of the UMBC, the party was leading the call for the creation of a Middle Belt state. However, the demand for further regionalisation of Nigeria suffered a setback in 1957 at the London constitutional conference as the Colonial Secretary Lennox-Boyd told delegates that Britain would consider the granting of independence to Nigeria if pressure in the country did not result in the creation of new states. In this event, Britain would have to determine

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<sup>59</sup> P.C. Logams, "The Middle Belt Movement in Nigerian Political Development: A Study in Political Identity, 1949-1967," (PhD Keele, 1985), 56.

<sup>60</sup> PRO CO 554/1183: Political Situation in Northern Region of Nigeria, 1956.

their viability, thus delaying independence.<sup>61</sup> The NPC opposed any change to the regional boundaries, claiming that, in its case, the interests of the minorities of the Middle Belt were adequately catered for within the Northern Region.<sup>62</sup> The Action Group had consistently encouraged the political expression of the minorities and stated that this problem should be dealt with before independence.<sup>63</sup> However, the constitutional conference established three committees to make special reports on the subjects of minorities, fiscal matters and delimitation of constituencies.

The Commission to enquire into the fears of minorities in Nigeria (Willink Commission) was inaugurated in 1957. The Commission was under the chairmanship of Henry Willink QC, the former Member of Parliament for Croydon. The terms of reference given to the Commission were: to ascertain facts about the fears of minorities and propose means of allaying those fears; to suggest safeguards which with this purpose could be included in the constitution of Nigeria; if no solution seemed possible to the Commission it should suggest recommendations for the creation of one or more new states.<sup>64</sup>

A memorandum by the Regional Government was presented to the Commission through the Attorney General, discouraging the creation of new states. The memorandum's title page was a quotation from Luke 11:17: "But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth." Thus, the crux of the government's argument was that the unity, and not division of the region was vital to its survival and existence. According to Ahmadu Bello (the Premier of Northern

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<sup>61</sup> *Report by the Nigeria Constitutional Conference held in London in May and June 1957* (London, 1957), p.24.

<sup>62</sup> PRO CO 554/1528: Proposal by NPC, 1957.

<sup>63</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1958, p.5; *Times*, 21 August 1958, p.7.

<sup>64</sup> PRO CO 957: Commission on Minority Groups in Nigeria (Willink Commission), 1957-58; PRO CO 554/1539: Commission of Enquiry into Minority Problems in Nigeria, 1958.



Region), if new states were created in the region, "it would break the steady stabilising influence which people in the North are convinced is the major role we have to play in forwarding the progress of the Federation."<sup>65</sup>

The UMBC and the Action Group were in favour of the creation of a Middle Belt state and were represented at the Commission by Fani Kayode. He relied on religious differences which exist between the 'far north' and the Middle Belt as the basis for the creation of the new proposed state. Kayode argued that the citizens of the new proposed state would be those who were commonly referred to as "pagans."<sup>66</sup> It was difficult for the UMBC-Action Group legal team to argue for the creation of a Middle Belt state based on ethnic affinity of the groups in the region as there were over two hundred different groups with varying cultures and languages.

The NPC lawyers argued that the creation of a Middle Belt Region would only result in chaos as different tribes were brought together.<sup>67</sup> Mr. Rewane representing the UMBC-Action Group alliance, disagreed with the NPC submission that the Middle Belt would be "a chaos of tribes chaotically delineated, [but it would be possible] "to classify them under four main groups: the Nupe group, comprising Nupe, Igala, Idoma and Igarra; Tiv group, comprising Tiv, Jukun and Arago; the Berom including Ankwe, Angas and Eggon; and the Bachama, Chamba and Bulawa.<sup>68</sup> Abdul Razaq, one of the NPC lawyers, objected to this classification and argued that each of these groups comprised numerous languages and dialects.<sup>69</sup> He further observed that although there was "tribal consciousness" in the Middle Belt, there was no desire for the different groups to come together. In order to support this claim, Abdul Razaq, called the chiefs of Mada, Eggon and Rindre to speak to the

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Commission and none of them said anything in favour of the Middle Belt Region. Most of the chiefs in central Nigeria were against the creation of a Middle Belt state as their appointment and patronage depended on their loyalty to the NPC-led government. In fact, Keffi Native Authority submitted a memorandum to the Commission disassociating itself with the call for the creation of a Middle Belt state. The three major reasons given were: that funds were insufficient for the functioning of an additional state; “resultant taxation increases will bear hardly on the peasantry”; and that there would be no sufficiently educated people to run the new state.<sup>70</sup>

The Willink Commission after hearing evidence came to the conclusion that there was no solid foundation to the minority allegations and therefore, it could not recommend the creation of one or more new states.<sup>71</sup> The Commission was of the opinion that there were more elements that bound most of the peoples of northern Nigeria together than divided them:

There is the faith and law of Islam; there is a tribal grouping, the combination of the Fulani, the Hausa, the Nupe and Kanuri...there is the Hausa language, widely used as a lingua franca; there is a system of administration based on the Emir and a feudal pyramid below him -- all these elements fusing to make what may for convenience be called the Northern System.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, the Commission based its argument against the creation of a new state in northern Nigeria primarily upon the difficulty of drawing boundaries between

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and Means of Allaying them* (London, 1958), p. 87.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

peoples and the belief that strong local feelings were only a transient feature of the Nigerian political scene.

The Delimitation Commission, was set up after the 1957 constitutional conference to divide Nigeria into constituencies for the federal election in 1959. The Commission was under the chairmanship of Lord Merthyr and began its work in October 1957. During its stay in Nigeria, the Commission visited the three regions and each of the regions had set up an advisory committee made up of the representatives of the main political parties who were able to make recommendations to the Commission.<sup>73</sup> One of the instructions given to the Commission was to divide the country into 320 electoral districts of approximately equal population, which should not adhere strictly to equality of numbers, but should have regard to the physical features, transport facilities, existing local government or Native Authority areas.<sup>74</sup> It was decided at the 1957 constitutional conference that there should be approximately one seat in the new House of Representatives to every one hundred thousand people in Nigeria. The Federal Department of Statistics estimated on the basis of the 1952-3 census that the population would be 31,559,026, and it was therefore agreed by all parties that there should be 320 seats.<sup>75</sup>

The work of the Delimitation Commission had wider implications for Akwanga region as it was allocated a seat in the forthcoming federal election in 1959.<sup>76</sup> This election was important because for the first time, the people in the region would be directly involved in the election of their representative to the new Federal House. In order to conduct a successful election, an Electoral Commission

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<sup>73</sup> *Report of the Constituency Delimitation Commission* (Lagos, 1958), p.70.

<sup>74</sup> *Nigeria Constitutional Conference*, p.207.

<sup>75</sup> *Constituency Delimitation Commission*, p. 80.

<sup>76</sup> For detailed discussion on the 1959 federal election in the three regions, see K.W.J. Post, *The Nigerian Federal Election of 1959: Politics and Administration in Developing Political System* (London, 1963).

was set up in August 1958 and the Colonial Office appointed Mr. Wraith as the new Chief Electoral Commissioner. Since the federal election in 1959 would be the first direct election to be held in northern Nigeria, the Commission had to organise the registration of electors, and Regulation 4 of the Commission stated: "Every person shall be entitled to register as an elector and if so registered to vote at an election who on the qualifying date is ordinarily resident in Nigeria and is a British subject or British protected person of the age of 21 years or upwards, and if ordinarily resident in the Northern Region is a male."<sup>77</sup> Provision of the Regulation disqualified women in the Northern Provinces from participating in the election, a limitation, which was criticised by the opponents of the NPC. Debate about the status of women before the 1959 election was controversial as their subordination was thought to be sanctioned primarily in religious rather than secular terms. Therefore any attempt to redefine such status must proceed on religious grounds. NEPU repeatedly challenged the exclusion of women from public affairs by emphasising that no Quranic text denied full political participation for women.<sup>78</sup> The NPC was not in favour of women's involvement in politics and the leadership of the party used the argument of lack of education to block any reform to the existing arrangement. According to Ahmadu Bello, the "education of women must reach a far greater strength, and the number of properly educated women must be increased to many times the present number before the vote would be used to full advantage."<sup>79</sup> Although women in northern Nigeria were not involved in political decision making in the period leading up to 1959, all the political parties had a 'women's wing' affiliated to them. These

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<sup>77</sup> *Federation of Nigeria Official Gazette* (Lagos, 1958), p.220.

<sup>78</sup> B.J. Callaway, *Muslim Hausa Women in Nigeria: Tradition and Change* (New York, 1987), pp.98-99.

<sup>79</sup> Bello, *My Life*, p.233.

women's wing, according to Barbara Callaway, came to have a derogatory connotation as they existed primarily to provide entertainment at political rallies.<sup>80</sup>

The registration procedure in Akwanga was simple. Describing the process, Abdul Ebuga, who served as an Assistant Registration Officer, noted:

An interested voter had to appear in person and fill in a form declaring himself to be 21 years of age or above and must be a resident of the area for some time and also stating his sex and occupation. But because the majority of people in Akwanga were illiterates, they usually ask us to fill in the forms, which we did. If we were not convinced that the voter was 21 years of age or not a resident in the area, we might reject his application.<sup>81</sup>

Although the process of registration was straightforward, the majority of the people in Akwanga did not come out to register for the election, as they were suspicious that voter's registration was connected with taxation.<sup>82</sup> In addition, most local people did not show any interest in party politics and consequently withdrew themselves from the political process. The registration was to be held from the 2 March to 11 April 1959 and in order to encourage the local people to come out to register, the District Officer made it clear to the District Heads: "the registration is not a tax count and is not concerned in any way with tax."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Callaway, *Hausa Women*, p.100.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 22 March 2004.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> NAK DEP/79: Registration for Federal Elections, 1959.



**Figure 7.1:** Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, March 2004

The Electoral Commission issued a rule that registration areas should not contain more than 2000 electors and that no voter should have to travel more than 12 miles to register.<sup>84</sup> This rule was not followed in Akwanga as the “geographical disposition and demography” made it practicably impossible as shown below:

Registration Area	Miles from Wamba	No. of Electors
Sabon Nunku	26	1991
Ungwan Zaria	35	1498
Akwanga	16	1673
Nasarawa Eggon	38	1483
Lizzin Keffi	56	2017
Mada Station	59	1741
Wangibi	59	1266
Wakama	19	1491
Wulko	26	756
Umme	38	1184
Wamba	-	2138
Mama	14	2191
Jimiya	15	364

Source: NAK DEP/79: Registration for Federal Elections, 1959

The Electoral Commission also issued out guidelines with regards to the qualifications of candidates for the forth-coming election. In order to be eligible to

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

contest the 1959 election, a prospective candidate must be male (in Northern Provinces) and over 21 years of age; must have resided in the area for at least three years before the election and had to be of sound mind.<sup>85</sup> A person that was declared bankrupt or who had served more than six months prison sentence was disqualified to contest in the election. An aspect of the disqualification that affected candidates in parts of northern Nigeria was the exclusion of public office holders in contesting the election, which pulled the carpet under the feet of the staff of the Native Authorities. Disqualification of public officers was announced only three weeks before the election and the party most hit by the new electoral law was the NPC who had about two-thirds of its candidates from the Native Authorities, including some Village and District Heads.<sup>86</sup> Leadership of the party quickly withdrew all candidates affected by the new law in order to avoid legal challenges after the election. In Akwanga, *malam* Audu (the chief of Eggon) was the NPC candidate for Akwanga federal constituency, but after the introduction of the new law, he was disqualified and his younger brother, Yakubu Allahnana was nominated to contest for the electoral seat.<sup>87</sup>

An interesting aspect of the election in Akwanga was the nature of the campaign conducted in the area. The opinion of local chiefs and especially of the educated elites in the region played an important role in the way local people decided to vote. National politics were still remote to most people in Akwanga, and without any contact with political leaders at the national level, many voters tended to know very little about what was going on. The voters therefore had to rely on the few individuals who were able to grasp some of the ideas of the national campaign and pass them on at local level. These groups of people became opinion leaders in Akwanga and were mostly employees of the Native Administration or the Christian

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<sup>85</sup> *Instructions to Polling Officers* (Lagos, nd), p.20.

<sup>86</sup> Post, *Federal Election*, p.226.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Yusuf Maikano at Wamba, 24 March 2004.

missions. They included among others; Iliya Rine, Balarabe Nunku (Ciroman Nunku), Audu Waju, Adamu Musa Galle, Abdul Ebuga and Yusuf Waju (Maikano).<sup>88</sup> Local people looked to these literate members of the community for a lead. In their respective districts, they were the main leaders of opinion and were admired due to their success and the ease with which they moved in the modern world because of their educational background. Therefore, their views on politics were sought after and their opinions trusted. This was a shift from the pre-1959 elections where politics was dominated by Christian trained elites from outside Akwanga. The reliance on the relatively young educated group in Akwanga meant that in the new sphere of party politics the traditional superiority of age was often no longer recognised. According to an informant, Baba Loko: "We had no idea of what was going on at that time because it was the first time we were given the opportunity to vote. Since we were not familiar with how things worked, we relied on Balarabe and his friends who knew more than their elders, so we looked up to them and followed their advice."<sup>89</sup>

The emerging educated group in Akwanga acted as the contact with the outside world and they fed information generated during the national campaign and transmitted them to the voters. This meant that the elaborate programmes and politics, which formed the substance of the national campaign, reached the constituencies only in a simplified form. If an idea did filter through to the constituency it was translated by the elites into local terms, and reinforced by local prejudices. The campaign strategy of using local issues in national election played to the advantage of the NPC in Akwanga. Besides the fact that the Native Authority staff in the division were mostly supporters of the NPC, the campaign of the party was conducted almost

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Baba Loko at Ungwan Loko, 20 March 2004.



entirely on the constituency level. As Post has observed, there was far less generation of ideas at the centre of the NPC, and no party newspapers by which they might be communicated.<sup>90</sup> Much more responsibility was laid on the local politicians to formulate and spread their own ideas, and in consequence these were usually in the form of local appeals. According to an informant, Audu Maiyaki, the local people were concerned mostly with the issue of fertilisers, provisions of wells and good roads.<sup>91</sup> This played into the hands of the NPC, which was seen as the party in power and thus capable of providing these basic facilities/amenities. The issue of the creation of a Middle Belt state, which was the basis of the UMBC-Action Group campaign, was not the immediate priority of the majority of the people of Akwanga. They were more interested in their day-to-day affairs than obscure and complicated politics of state creation.<sup>92</sup> Another advantage that the NPC had over the UMBC in Akwanga was the party symbol for the election. The three major political parties in Nigeria – NPC, NCNC and Action Group – had party symbols. The NPC symbol was a hoe; the Action Group palm tree and the NCNC a cock. According to Maikano, the NPC campaign in Akwanga was devoted to impressing the local voters with the symbol of the party – hoe – which represented the occupation of the majority of the people (farming) and therefore, representing their interests.<sup>93</sup> However, mission trained elites were strong supporters of the UMBC and they used their influence as opinion leaders in their respective district to canvass support for the party.

Generally, the importance of a few opinion leaders in shaping the political decision of the local people meant that often the idea passed on were judged not in the light of their own merit, but according to the status of these elites. Association of

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<sup>90</sup> Post, *Federal Election*, pp.284-328.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Audu Maiyaki at Akwanga, 11 November 2004.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Yusuf Maikano at Wamba 24 March 2004.

opinion with status meant that the parties sought to gather together as successful a body of campaigners as they could. Although majority of the native authority staff, including teachers were strong NPC members/supporters in all the districts of the division, the UMBC-AG supporters were becoming popular to the voters.<sup>94</sup> These opinion leaders became important in helping voters to make a voting decision and although they could not directly order the local people to vote for a particular party or candidate, they were able to convince voters by virtue of their personal prestige within the colonial society of Akwanga.

Besides the local educated group in Akwanga who played an important role in the electioneering, the chiefs in the region became partisans in the election of 1959. The chiefs were strong supporters of the NPC and they used their positions as leaders of the Native Authorities to canvass support and also coerce their subjects into the party.<sup>95</sup> The chiefs in the region, according to Yusuf Maikano, received their instructions to campaign for NPC from Ahmadu Bello and they in turn invited the village heads to their palaces.<sup>96</sup> The village heads were given instructions to mobilise their people and vote for the NPC candidate.

The federal election was fixed for Saturday, 12 December 1959. However, finding enough staff to man the polling stations in Akwanga became a serious problem because employing literates who were not Native Administration staff to be engaged in electoral duties was practicably impossible.<sup>97</sup> Out of the 51 applications received by the District Officer of Akwanga for electoral duties, only 29 candidates were suitable.<sup>98</sup> The practice of engaging Native Authority staff in electoral duties

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 22 March 2004

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Yusuf Maikano at Wamba, 4 April 2004.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 22 March 2004; Interview with Audu Maiyaki at Akwanga, 11 December 2004.

<sup>98</sup> NAK DEP/79: Registration for Federal Elections, 1959.

was common in parts of the Northern Provinces and the UMBC-Action Group alliance was quick to attack the engagement of Native Authority staff as Polling Officers. In an editorial of the Action Group *Daily Service*, the newspaper commented:

Everyone knows that every District Head in the Northern Region is virtually an organising secretary of the NPC. And we know that one of the evils of the Electoral College System which we are now replacing is that it makes it possible for an Emir to frighten members of the College into voting for the candidates of his choice. To appoint District Heads as Polling Officers is to perpetuate this evil and to defeat the very purpose of adult suffrage.<sup>99</sup>

The involvement of local chiefs in electoral duties was criticised in an open letter by Rotimi Williams – the Action Group chief legal adviser.<sup>100</sup> He challenged the instructions given to Polling Officers in the Northern Provinces to allow District and Village Heads to take charge of security during the election. As noted in Chapter 3, the Native Authorities under the local chiefs had the responsibility to maintain law and order in respective districts, which included polling stations. The Electoral Commission had no power to assume the control of the Native Authority police and as a federal body it had to respect Regional sovereignty.<sup>101</sup> However, a compromise was reached between the Electoral Commission and the Northern Regional Government and it was agreed that District and village Heads were to enter the polling stations only to cast their votes.

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<sup>99</sup> *Daily Service*, 12 June 1959.

<sup>100</sup> *Daily Times*, 13 November 1959.

<sup>101</sup> *Reports on the Nigeria Federal Elections, December 1959* (Lagos, 1960), pp. 16-17.

Polling stations were closed for voting at 5pm and any voter after that time was not admitted. The election regulation stated that any person “already inside the polling station or in the immediate vicinity waiting to enter and vote” was to be allowed.<sup>102</sup> When polling was finally completed, the ballot boxes from all the polling stations were taken to Wamba to be counted, which was followed by the announcement of the result by the Returning Officer.<sup>103</sup> The closely contested seat in Plateau province was that of Akwanga federal constituency, which was won by Yakubu Allahnana of the NPC with a majority of 314 votes.<sup>104</sup> The total number of votes cast for the election was 16,973 out of 19,803 people that registered (20.5 per cent of the population). The NPC won 5,842 votes (34.4 per cent); NEPU-NCNC alliance, 2,481 (14.6); Action Group, 5,528 (32.6 per cent); two independent candidates, 2,642 (15.6 per cent) and 480 (2.8 per cent).<sup>105</sup> In Plateau province, the NPC and NEPU recorded some electoral gains. Out of the nine federal seats, the NPC won three, NEPU one, and the Action Group five.<sup>106</sup> In central Nigeria where the UMBC was strong, the result of the 1959 federal election showed that majority of candidates that won the election achieved it under the Action Group ticket.

It is difficult to determine what factors influenced the voting decision of the people of Akwanga in the election. Local people had different motives for voting for a particular candidate or a political party during the election. Some voters were influenced by the educated group or the local chiefs, who were considered as opinion leaders in the region, rather than the programmes or ideology of any of the political parties.

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<sup>102</sup> *Nigeria Official Gazette*, p.240.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 22 March 2004.

<sup>104</sup> *The Nigerian Citizen*, 19 December 1959.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Although some of my informants argued that the educated group or the local chiefs did not influence their voting decisions, on a closer examination, the reasons they gave for voting for a particular party were those that the opinion leaders transmitted at the local level. For example, according to an informant, Alhaji Idirisu, “we voted for the NPC because it was the strongest party in whole of northern Nigeria and it was the only party that could provide us with fertilizers, good roads and schools.”<sup>107</sup> The ability of the NPC to provide these facilities was the popular slogans used during the electioneering campaign by the NPC political activists. The Action Group-UMBC supporters on their part were concerned with the dominance of Hausa-Fulani in the NPC. According to Sidi Tide, “we knew the plans of some of the Hausa-Fulani in the NPC. They wanted to win the election so that they could gradually convert us to Islam even by using force as they tried to do with our grandparents. We voted for Iliya’s party because it was fighting for our interest.”<sup>108</sup> The election was keenly contested because of the effectiveness of the propaganda of the opinion leaders who used different tactics to gain support for their respective parties. They gauged the local concerns and sentiments and cleverly articulated them in their election campaigns.

Although voters were attracted to vote for a particular candidate or a political party for various reasons, the decision of the opinion leaders in Akwanga played a major role in deciding the voting pattern in the region. As already mentioned, the opinion leaders could not force individuals to vote for a candidate or a party, however, their respected position in the colonial society meant their opinion was highly regarded and sought after. An informant, Maiganga Zenya, summed up the importance of the opinion leaders in the voting in Akwanga in the 1959 elections: “it

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<sup>107</sup> Interviews at Gudi with Alhaji Idirisu on 5 March 2004.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Sidi Tide at Gwanje Sarki, 1 December 2003.

was our first election and we had no idea of what the parties stood for. All we knew was what our leaders [village heads and educated group] told us. Since they were familiar with the politics and the way of the white man, we followed their advice.”<sup>109</sup> It is important to mention that the way people in the region voted in the 1959 elections defied religious, social background or ethnic classification. Although the Action Group-UMBC alliance, on the one hand, enjoyed a considerable support from Christian voters, the major factor that contributed to this was the presence of the mission-trained teachers who became opinion leaders in areas without government schools. The NEPU-NCNC alliance on the other hand gained its support from the Hausa and Igbo immigrants in Wamba and Gudi. The political awareness of the immigrant group was higher than those of the local people.<sup>110</sup> The Hausa and Igbo people were able to register in their numbers for the election. The Hausa immigrants, who were mostly labourers in the mining industry, were strong supporters of NEPU who became resentful of the Native Administration that the NPC represented. The Hausa and Igbo voters were the only groups that made conscious decisions in their voting pattern that were uninfluenced by the local opinion leaders. Their voting decision, however, reflected the alliance both NEPU and NCNC had at the national level.

The failure of the UMBC in 1959 elections was its ineffectiveness in attempting to forge a common goal throughout central Nigeria. In fact, formal party organisation did not begin until late 1958 when they were already in alliance with the AG and it was possible for the latter to provide the UMBC with financial aid. Until March 1960, there was no any real attempt made at establishing a party organisation with the institution of divisional and provincial party organs and below this, the

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<sup>109</sup> Interview at Gwanje with Maiganga Zenya, 14 November 2003.

<sup>110</sup> Interviews at Gudi with Adamu Salihu and Alhaji Idirisu, 5 March 2004

constituency organisations. NPC on its part employed a variety of strategies in order to weaken the UMBC leadership. Leaders of the UMBC were given money and offered political appointments, which created confusion in the party as they began to fight with each other. Some members of the UMBC crossed over to join the NPC and began to betray their former members. For instance, Yahaya Kwande from Shendam division of Plateau province did not only join the NPC, but converted to Islam. His reason was that the NPC was the enemy he knew and that the presence of himself and others in the party would counter the Hausa-Fulani dominance.<sup>111</sup> Pastor David Lot became one of the strongest supporters of Sir Ahmadu Bello in the Northern House of Assembly. In a speech to the House in 1963, he declared:

All of us in this region are ready at any second to sacrifice ourselves, to die, I repeat, to die in order that Ahmadu Bello will be alive. I know, sir, all the Christian community are always praying to God that Sir Ahmadu Bello will be protected by God's mighty hand.<sup>112</sup>

The disarray in the leadership of the UMBC meant that the party did not pose any serious threat to the NPC. Its alliance with the NPC resulted in factions forming different movements and by 1960, the UMBC only existed in Lafia and Tiv divisions and thus, it became more of a protest movement of the Tiv people.<sup>113</sup>

In the 1960s, politics in Akwanga began to change and the influence of the educated group and the local chiefs began to wane. The influx of Hausa and Igbo immigrants into the region injected new life and changed local politics. The Hausa

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<sup>111</sup> H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan, 1993), p.9.

<sup>112</sup> *Northern House of Assembly Debates* March 1963.

<sup>113</sup> See further discussion on the Tiv riots in M.J. Dent, "A Minority Party – The United Middle Belt Congress," Mackintosh (ed), *Nigerian Government and Politics*, pp.461-507.

immigrants in Wamba and Gudi, for example, were labourers and mostly NEPU supporters who, as already mentioned, were against the NPC. They began to influence local people on their voting decision, a situation capitalized upon by some of the educated Christians, who considered the NPC as a threat to their political and religious survival.<sup>114</sup> Although the immigrants and the Christian elites had no formal alliance between them, they were able to forge a common goal: the defeat of the NPC in any election.

## CONCLUSION

A major dimension of decolonisation in northern Nigeria was the struggle between “traditional” and “modern” elites for state power at the local, regional and federal levels of government. The participation of the peoples of Akwanga in the political process was complicated. The local people removed themselves from politics as a defense mechanism, beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing into the mid twentieth century. Although there is no concrete evidence to explain the attitudes of the peoples of Akwanga towards party politics, it is possible that because of the slow development of Western education in the region, there was a delay in the political awareness of the local people, which only began to evolve in the 1960s. For example, when direct elections were first introduced in 1959, the majority of the peoples of Akwanga showed their lack of interest by not registering, because they thought the elections were connected with tax assessment. In addition, the lack of experience of party politics and electioneering in Akwanga produced a low turnout for the 1959 federal election.

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with Abdul Ebuga at Nasarawa Eggon, 22 March 2004; Interview with Audu Maiyaki at Akwanga, 11 December 2004.



The dominance of local chiefs in political decision-making began to change after 1959. The young educated groups that emerged during the period leading up to independence took control of leadership of the various districts in Akwanga. In addition, the social and economic changes experienced in Akwanga began to have a bearing on political developments in the region in the 1960s. For example, the influx of Hausa immigrants sharpened the political awareness of the local people. These immigrants were *talakawa* and mostly NEPU supporters who became resentful of the Native Authorities in the emirates and therefore became propaganda machines in discrediting the NPC. This resulted in an unusual alliance with the emerging educated Christians, who considered the NPC threat not only in political terms, but also from a religious point of view. Although there was no formal alliance between the Hausa immigrants and the mission-trained elites, they sang from the same hymn sheet: a dislike for the NPC.

The performance of the political parties at the grassroots level depended on the support they enjoyed from the educated elites. The NPC was strong at the divisional and district headquarters because of the concentration of the Native Authority staff/teachers. The UMBC-Action Group had strong support from the rural areas because of the good will of the mission-trained teachers who were sympathetic to their aims. By the 1960s, the political divide in Akwanga was based mostly on the influence of the educated elites rather than any other ideological persuasion.

## CONCLUSION

This research has sought to direct attention away from the achievements of centralised states and towards the history of the minority “tribal” societies in the savannah of central Nigeria. Earlier views of the history of the “pagan” peoples of the region stressed the importance of external influences – centralised states and colonial rule – on decentralised societies. The decentralised societies were considered to be static and virtually unchanged from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. This research shows that the notion of static “tribal” societies is a misnomer. It has been argued that the peoples of Akwanga, like other decentralised societies, were able to forge their society and create their own distinct history and identity outside the control of the centralised state builders by resisting their incursions.

By the end of British rule in Nigeria in 1960, the social and economic structures of Akwanga region were transformed from those at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the colonisation of Akwanga was an interlude of comparatively short duration, it radically transformed the economy and society of the region. One of the immediate impacts of colonial rule in the region was the imposition of British law and order, which resulted in the establishment of a greater degree of continuous peace and relative stability. The Eggon people took advantage of colonial peace to colonise new agricultural frontiers in the plains. They descended from their crowded hill village settlements to the neighbouring lowlands, from which insecurity had hitherto barred them. The depredation of the Hausa-Fulani in the nineteenth century was no longer an issue. However, the migration of the Eggon people to the lowlands was not only as a result of law and order imposed by the

British. It was also prompted by the introduction of taxation, which induced them to move in order to earn tax money by the cultivation of cash crops.

One important implication of colonial rule in Akwanga was rapid population growth. The population of the region more than doubled from about 40,000 at the start of British rule to over 100,000 by the 1960s. This was as a result of a combination of factors: the influx of immigrants, who took advantage of colonial law and order to trade or seek employment with the native administration or farming and the advance in medical sciences, which brought endemic diseases under control and reduced death rates.

There was an expansion in the geographical frontier of Akwanga as new towns like Gudi, Marmara, Rafin Tabo were established while Wamba was subsumed into an expanding colonial administrative and commercial capital. In addition, the readjustment of the political and geographical boundaries to fit in with the native administration system meant that Akwanga was redesigned on the basis of territorial rather than tribal districts. In terms of political relations, there was also a fundamental and permanent shift in the source of political power and authority from the traditional elites of clan and religious heads to the educated elites. These educated classes were products of both missionary and government schools. Therefore, Western education became a source of political power in the colonial society of Akwanga and thus transformed the politics of the region and the reliance on a relatively young educated group at the expense of the traditional elites. By the 1960s, the traditional superiority of age was often no longer recognised in party politics and the educated groups became the opinion leaders in the area.

The introduction of taxation and the cultivation of cash crops changed the economy of the region, over which colonial and indigenous authorities exercised

little control. After the government lifted the restriction imposed on foodstuff business in Akwanga, it resulted in the emergence of local entrepreneurs in the 1960s, such as Alhaji Angulu, Alhaji Yakubu and Alhaji Musa, who were able to break into the long-distance foodstuff trade.

The present-day economy and society of Akwanga is a product of historical forces, which have wrought significant alterations since the time of initial colonial contact. Colonial rule changed the region into a food reserve and labour pool for tin mining. British economic policies like the high rate of taxation in mining areas and the surrounding communities were designed to restrict development which might compete with its perceived role within the Nigerian colonial economy. The taxation pressure exerted on the local people propelled them to supply labour to the tin mines or engaged in the production of food crops in order to earn tax money. The mining camps became a ready market for the food crops produced in Akwanga. However, a major transformation in the economy of Akwanga was the introduction of new crops, which changed dramatically the organisation of labour, settlement patterns and the composition of household units. For example, immigrants introduced the cultivation of groundnuts, yam and cassava in the 1920s, which were integrated into the agricultural system of the local people in Akwanga during the colonial period and remain to present-day an important source of income and food.

To conclude, colonial rule changed Akwanga society from top to bottom. During the sixty-odd years of British rule, the social, political and economic organisation of the region was altered. Although this transformation was of a massive and decisive nature, much of Akwanga society continued to depend on agriculture as a means of livelihood. The success of British economic policy was the transformation of the Akwanga region into a food producing area while preserving

the pre-existing local methods of production. Thus, colonial rule in Akwanga marked a clear watershed in the history and the subsequent development of the region, and therefore its history has been and will continue to be very much influenced by the colonial experience.

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### **ORAL SOURCES**

Name: Hon. Abdul Ebuga (OON)

Occupation: Retired Teacher

Age: 82

Place of interview: Nasarawa Eggon

Date of interview: March 2004.

Name: Baba Kaze

Occupation: Farmer

Age: Approximately 76

Place of interview: Akwanga

Date of interview: 6 May 2004.

Name: Baba Loko

Occupation: Infirm

Age: 92

Place of interview: Ungwan Loko

Date of interview: December 2003.

Name: Bala Maishai

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 67

Place of Interview: Gwanje Bishu

Date of interview: 14 November 2003.

Name: Sergeant Buba

Occupation: Retired police officer

Age: 85

Place of interview: Andaha

Date of interview: April 2004.

Name: Baba Chube

Occupation: Businessman/Farmer

Age: 65

Place interview: Akwanga

Date of interview: 22 April 2004

Name: Late Dauda Rija

Occupation: Retired civil servant

Age: 72

Place of interview: Andaha

Date of interview: 12 March 2004

Name: Maiganga Zenya

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 68

Place of interview: Kanbar

Date of interview: December 2003.

Name: Laka Bako

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 73

Place of interview: Ahgbor

Date of interview: 13 March 2004

Name: Likita Abimiku

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 64

Place of interview: Endehu

Date of interview: 15 November 2004

Name: Mohammed Yakubu

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 71

Place of interview: Mama

Date of interview: 20 April 2004

Name: Late Musa Gun



Age: 83

Occupation: Retired prison officer

Place of interview: Wamba

Date of interview: 22 May 2002

Name: Philip Maiangwa

Occupation: Politician

Age: 65

Place of interview: Wamba

Date of interview: 17 May 2003.

Name: Reverend Mari

Occupation: Clergy

Age: 67

Place of interview: Alushi

Date of interview: 22 May 2004

Name: Sidi Tide

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 74

Place of interview: Gwanje

Date of interview: December 2003.

Name: Malam Yakubu

Occupation: Retired civil servant

Age: 83

Place of interview: Andaha

Date of interview: 10 November 2003.

Name: Musa Bako

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 68

Place of interview: Ginda

Date of interview: 21 May 2004.

Name: Dawa Dandoka

Occupation: Farmer

Age: 70

Place of interview: Gbuje

Date of interview: 20 November 2003.

Name: Muhammadu Allahnana

Occupation: Farmer/Miner

Age: 66

Place of interview: Marmara

Date of interview: March 2004.

Name: Reverend Mantani Kreni

Occupation: Clergy

Age 75

Place of interview: Akwanga

Date of interview: April 2004.

Name: Alhaji Yusuf Maikano

Occupation: Politician

Age: 68

Place of interview: Wamba

Date of interview: March 2004.